3-1-1994

Sexual Use, Abuse and Exploitation of Children: Challenges in Implementing Children's Human Rights

Roger J.R. Levesque

Follow this and additional works at: https://brooklynworks.brooklaw.edu/blr

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://brooklynworks.brooklaw.edu/blr/vol60/iss3/3

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Journals at BrooklynWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Brooklyn Law Review by an authorized editor of BrooklynWorks.
INTRODUCTION

Despite initial optimism, the New World Order has not yet led to an expansion of human rights protections or to the creation of new rights-protective regimes. For example, the extent to which children’s basic human rights will be recognized and protected remains unclear. This lack of attention to
children's rights in the New World Order is particularly disturbing when one considers that the sexual maltreatment of children\(^3\) is a global problem that is increasing in scope yet essentially goes unnoticed.\(^4\)

The failure to conceptualize sexual maltreatment within the existing framework of international human rights law\(^5\) is distressing. The global community recognizes that children possess human rights,\(^6\) including the right to be protected

---


It seems that several countries have been moving rapidly toward the physical betterment of their children's lives. See UNICEF, THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN 1994, at 1-56 (1994) (detailing specific progress against major threats to the health and well-being of the world's children). In the United States, however, more children than ever before are living in crisis. See CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND, THE STATE OF AMERICA'S CHILDREN: YEARBOOK 1994, at 1-16, 63-71, 73-77 (1994) (detailing the rise of children living in poverty and with violence without adequate health care and nutrition); see also DAVID A. HAMBURG, TODAY'S CHILDREN: CREATING A FUTURE FOR A GENERATION IN CRISIS 39-48 (1992) (succinctly summarizing the crisis facing children in the United States); id. at 51-333 (detailing ways in which the crisis could be met appropriately); U.S. ADVISORY BOARD ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT, DEP'T OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVS., NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS: A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN 1-15 (1993) (detailing the "national emergency" in child protection).


\(^4\) Sexual maltreatment is quickly becoming a global issue. See Margot Hornblower, The Skin Trade: Poverty, Chaos and Porous Borders Have Turned Prostitution into a Global Growth Industry, Debasing the Women and Children of the World, TIME, June 21, 1993, at 44; Michael S. Serrill, Defiling Children, TIME, June 21, 1993, at 52; see also infra notes 103-09 and accompanying text.

\(^5\) See infra note 9. The failure to view maltreatment as a basic human right is evidenced by its omission from UNICEF's annual report on children's issues. See, for example, UNICEF, supra note 2, at 64-83, which focuses on mortality, nutrition, health, education and economic factors as indicators of children's welfare. But see CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND, supra note 2, at 88 (reporting rates of maltreatment and neglect).

\(^6\) See Levesque, supra note 1, at 197-202 (detailing the international changes in the manner in which children are viewed). See generally MARY A. MASON, FROM FATHER'S PROPERTY TO CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: THE HISTORY OF CHILD CUSTODY IN THE UNITED STATES (1994).
from some forms of sexual maltreatment. Yet, in application, the focus of protection for children has been limited to prostitution and pornography. Commentators have failed to argue for the expansion of these protections or for the basic human right to be free from sexual maltreatment.

The lack of interest in a more expansive view of sexual maltreatment should not be surprising to those familiar with international human rights law: there are virtually no explicit, enforceable international protections against sexual maltreatment of children. Although the right to be free from sexual exploitation sometimes has been perceived as a human right, it usually has been limited to health or economic issues requiring

---

7 See infra notes 122-32.
9 As an international human rights issue, sexual maltreatment has focused on female genital mutilation. These discussions are interesting in that they continue even though protection against such treatment is not a right explicitly recognized in human rights instruments. Cf. Geraldine van Bueren, Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation: A Suggested Human Rights Approach, 2 INT'L J. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS 45, 45 (1994) (advocating for the protection and prevention of child sexual abuse by including such abuse within international human rights law). This lack of recognition has been a major obstacle to those combating female circumcision. See Karen Engle, Female Subjects of Public International Law: Human Rights and the Exotic Other Female, 26 NEW ENG. L. REV. 1509, 1513-14 (1992); Robyn C. Smith, Female Circumcision: Bringing Women's Perspectives into the International Debate, 65 S. CAL. L. REV. 2449 (1992); Comment, What's Culture Got To Do With It? Excising the Harmful Tradition of Female Circumcision, 106 HARV. L. REV. 1944, 1957 nn.94-98 (1993). It is important to note that these discussions limit their examination to the sexual maltreatment of girls; the sexual maltreatment of boys has yet to be investigated. See, e.g., Kristen Lee, Female Genital Mutilation: Medical Aspects and the Rights of Children, 2 INT'L J. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS 35, 35 (1994) (choosing not to examine male circumcision since it “cannot be considered an infringement upon the health or rights of boys and young men”).

Even anthropologists, the group expected to report cultural practices, generally have failed to address the varieties of sexual maltreatment across cultures. See Jill E. Korbin, Child Sexual Abuse: Implications from the Cross-Cultural Record, in CHILD SURVIVAL: ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE TREATMENT AND MALTREATMENT OF CHILDREN 247 (Nancy Scheper-Hughes ed., 1987) (noting anthropologists' complacency about reporting incest and improper sexual conduct within the family). See generally David Finkelhor & Jill Korbin, Child Abuse as an International Issue, 12 CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT 3 (1988) (examining dimensions of child abuse and suggesting a strategy for an international approach to policy development concerning child abuse).

10 Van Bueren, supra note 9, at 45.
only progressive implementation. In addition, the right to be free from sexual abuse commonly has not been regarded as a human rights issue. Moreover, some practices, such as the sexual use of children in ritualistic initiation ceremonies, have never even been issues of concern to commentators.

This Article addresses the general failure to view children's protection from sexual maltreatment as a basic human rights issue and examines this right in the context of international human rights law. Part I examines instances of the sexual use of children where the children are being used sexually in cultures that view such practices as a necessary prerequisite to healthy development and full participation in society. This discussion considers the inherent conflict between individual rights and cultural norms, and evaluates the available international protections for children. Part II discusses the sexual exploitation of children, particularly how children are sexually exploited for purely economic gain. This section examines how the international protections against exploitation may conflict with the rights of nations and individuals to utilize their own economic and social resources. Part III then analyzes the sexual abuse of children, in situations where clear prohibitions against sexual interactions with children exist and where such acts generally are viewed as harmful. The section frames the argument for protection against sexual abuse in terms of conflict between children's rights and family rights.

Finally, this Article concludes by emphasizing the complexity of sexual maltreatment and the need for diverse responses to address the rights involved. Previous commentaries have overemphasized cultural sensitivity, protection for

---

11 See infra notes 16-17 and accompanying text.
12 Van Bueren, supra note 9, at 45 (the reason for this failure is that human rights have been viewed as the law of nations, rather than private law).
13 It is important to differentiate active sexual use in rituals from rituals that prepare children for sexual activities. The latter have been well-studied, as in female ritual mutilation. See infra notes 15-18. The former has not received any attention from legal commentators. Indeed, only anthropologists seemingly have been interested in ritual use of children, especially the use of boys. See infra notes 20-31 and accompanying text.
14 Several of the aspects of the discussion of specific types of child sexual maltreatment also are applicable to other types of abuse. The types of maltreatment are being offered only as a means to examine issues relevant to the broader category of child sexual maltreatment.
families' privacy, and consideration for communities' economies. Any serious response to protect children from sexual maltreatment necessitates intruding on cultures and families, as well as infringing upon countries' economic and social resources. Putting aside issues of morality and implementation, the history and current trends in international law dictate such intervention.

I. THE SEXUAL USE OF CHILDREN: CULTURAL VS. INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

In terms of children's rights, the practice of female genital mutilation has been one of the most poignant controversies at the heart of the conflict between peoples' rights to cultural autonomy and individual self-determination. Two arguments against female circumcision are most persuasive: (1) it is a traditional practice with prejudicial consequences to the health of children, and thus should be abolished; and (2) that genital mutilation is torture. Although intuitively accurate, both approaches are inherently limited. For example, if health was the major issue, the "health" approach already would have led to the eradication of the practices. That is, as nations are under the obligation to promote "healthy" practices to the extent that they have the resources, and the resources needed to abolish genital mutilation essentially are minimal, if health was the issue, the eradication of the practice should be easily attained.

---

15 See supra note 9.


17 In addition to the cost of disseminating information and educating the public, there are minimal resource implications attached to prohibiting female circumcision through national legislation. See Jennifer Schirmer et al., Anthropology and Human Rights: A Selected Bibliography, in HUMAN RIGHTS AND ANTHROPOLOGY 121, 190 (Theodore E. Downing & Gilbert Kushner eds., 1988) (noting the importance of education in combating female circumcision and the fear that simply viewing genital mutilation as a health issue and offering operations in hospitals will further institutionalize the practice and make it more difficult to eradicate).
Additionally, the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment does not define torture such that it covers genital mutilation. Furthermore, both approaches leave unchallenged other traditional practices—such as certain masculinity rituals—that make use of children in sexual ways. These practices provide examples of the unavoidable conflict between individuals' human rights or group rights of "peoples" and potential international obligations to intervene.

A. The Sexual Use of Children

Recently, several indigenous Melanesian cultures have gained a degree of notoriety as anthropologists have "discovered" and begun to pay theoretical and comparative attention to reporting and explaining behaviors that have been given the controversial label "homosexual societies." Although various
forms of same-sex ritual behavior have been reported in these societies, the aspects relevant to a discussion of child sexual use are those which involve the homosexual use of boys.\textsuperscript{21}

The Sambia of New Guinea is the most well-documented society that routinely makes use of homosexual rituals involving young boys.\textsuperscript{22} Like several New Guinea peoples, the Sambia believe that male maturation does not occur as an innate biological process.\textsuperscript{23} The Sambia believe that masculinity must be forced or initiated through the intervention of cultural practices: masculinity can be achieved only through sequenced rites of transition.\textsuperscript{24} These rites involve subjecting boys to numerous tests and brutal hazing—some of which involve physical beating, thrashing and nose-bleeding rites.\textsuperscript{25}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} For a listing of other societies that practice similar rituals and believe that boys must be "made" into men by ritual activation, see David G. Gilmore, Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity 153 (1990).
\item \textsuperscript{23} The Sambia believe that women have a special internal organ, called tingu, present from birth, that slowly matures them naturally. Boys also have the same organ at birth, but they are weak and inactive, and require semen to grow. See Herdt, Guardians of the Flutes, supra note 22, at 167-72.
\item \textsuperscript{24} See Herdt, Guardians of the Flutes, supra note 22, at 203-54.
\item \textsuperscript{25} See Herdt, The Sambia, supra note 22, at 101-69 (describing the several stages of initiation). Nose bleeding is considered to be the most painful ritual aimed at causing authentic physical and psychological trauma. Id. at 139-45; Herdt, Guardians of the Flutes, supra note 22, at 224. The method is simple: sharp, stick-stiff grasses are forced up the boys' nostrils until the blood flows copiously. Id. at 225. In other rituals, the boys are flailed violently with sticks, switches or bristly objects until their skin is "opened up" and the blood flows. Id. at 222; see also Herdt, The Sambia, supra note 22, at 184-85 (describing ritual nose bleeding and its necessarily traumatic effects).
\end{itemize}
\end{thebibliography}
In addition to the usual bloodletting and hazing found in several indigenous cultures, Sambia rituals also involve a period of "homosexuality" in which youngsters are forced to perform fellatio on older boys or adult men. The Sambia believe that repeated ritual insemination triggers the process of male development, that semen ingestion provides boys with the substance or "seed" of growing masculinity. The Sambia hold firmly to these practices and contend that failure to perform masculinization rites will lead to the destruction of their culture.

These masculinization rituals, appropriately interpreted, are a necessary passageway to manhood, including "exclusive heterosexuality," marriage and procreation. All aspects of the rituals, including the series of "semen transactions," are rituals and have described their "cruel, brutal, and sadistic" processes. Donald F. Tuzin, Ritual Violence Among the Ilahita Arapesh: The Dynamics of Moral and Religious Uncertainty, in RITUALS OF MANHOOD, supra note 22, at 321, 325. One group of commentators described a part of male initiation as follows:

Now the instruments used for bleeding the nose are not simply jabbed into the nostrils, but driven deeply with a stone or wooden pounder to cause very profuse bleeding. Similarly the glans penis is not simply incised, but small wedges of flesh removed from either side, producing deep, half-inch-long gashes that occasionally penetrate the urethra. The lacerated glans then is struck sharply and repeatedly with the blade of the bamboo knife used in the cutting and also is rubbed vigorously with salt or nettles.


27 HERDT, GUARDIANS OF THE FLUTES, supra note 22, at 232-42 (noting that boys are assigned to older men who are not close blood relatives).

28 HERDT, GUARDIANS OF THE FLUTES, supra note 22, at 236 (noting that repeated inseminations are needed to "create a pool of maleness" deposited in a young boy's inactive tingu). It is believed that the semen actually strengthens the boy's bones and builds muscles, until eventually, with enough semen ingested, the boy begins puberty. See also HERDT, THE SAMBIA, supra note 22, at 102-03 (calling the entire process "ritualized masculinization," a process that requires the "[o]ral ingestion of semen—ritualized fellatio . . . [so that] after years of ritualized homosexuality and body treatment . . . [the process creates] a means of stimulating their maleness and masculinity").

29 HERDT, GUARDIANS OF THE FLUTES, supra note 22, at 205.

30 HERDT, GUARDIANS OF THE FLUTES, supra note 22, at 3; see also id. at 218-19, 234-36 (describing the importance of semen ingestion for the development of masculinity).
necessary events integral to the symbolic world of Sambia's culture. These rituals continue, despite attempts by the Australian government to eradicate them.  

The Sambia induction of boys into manhood through a series of culturally imposed rituals highlights several of the difficulties involved in trying to respect both cultural and individual rights. Although it is an integral part of Sambia's culture, the ritualization process clearly uses boys in ways that otherwise would violate the human dignity provisions of most human rights treaties. The Sambia provide a specific example of the need to balance both cultural and individual rights in international law and to determine the extent to which children are to be protected against sexual use.

---


32 Taking a Western human rights perspective, the practices invariably violate what every human rights instrument affirms: "the inherent dignity . . . and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family." Convention on the Rights of the Child, supra note 2, pmbl. ¶ 1; see also LOUIS HENKIN, THE RIGHTS OF MAN TODAY 131-32 (1978) (arguing that human rights ideology rests on "respect for the individual welfare, autonomy, and dignity of men and women").

33 This balance is rather important because commentators tend to discuss cultural rights in a vacuum and to disagree about the extent to which culture and/or individual rights are to be protected. Compare R.J. VINCENT, HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS 37-57, 111-52 (1986) (arguing for a "basic needs doctrine," which focuses on cultural pluralism and gives priority to subsistence rights) with JACK DONNELLY, UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS IN THEORY & PRACTICE 109-25 (George A. Lopez ed., 1989) (arguing for the universal recognition of human rights and for weak cultural relativism and further arguing for core rights which must be recognized by all societies which are connected to human dignity) and HENKIN, supra note 32, at 131-32 ("Occasional tensions between individual rights and public good, or between competing rights, may require accommodation between them, but that too has to be achieved within the human rights ideology, with respect for the individual welfare, autonomy, and dignity of men and women today and tomorrow."). But see SMITH, supra note 9, at 2452-73, 2503 (challenging an anthropological theory proposing that female ritual circumcision is integral to tribal cultures); Comment, supra note 9, at 1995 (arguing that "the promotion of universal human rights is not a mutually exclusive alternative to the maintenance of cultural identity and tradition").
B. Cultural and Group Rights vs. Individual Rights

The difficulty in deciding which rights are to be respected in Sambian society reflects the international community's goal of preserving the right to traditional cultural practices while simultaneously ensuring individuals' dignity and rights. The twin concepts of cultural rights and peoples' autonomy found in international instruments are vital to understanding the position of international law and the role of nation states in ensuring rights. If existing international instruments are taken seriously, children's individual rights should take precedence over abusive cultural practices.


35 See supra note 34.

36 It is important to emphasize that declarations (and resolutions) adopted by the General Assembly are not binding upon the member states. Only conventions adopted by the United Nations and ratified by the legislature of each member state can convert a convention into international law. IAN BROWNLE, PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL LAW 554 (3d ed. 1979). Despite the fact that the UDHR frequently is regarded as part of the law of the United Nations, it still is not binding upon its signatories. Id. at 571.

37 UDHR, supra note 34, at art. 22.

38 UDHR, supra note 34, at art. 27(1).
Two conclusions may be drawn from the "cultural rights" protected by the Universal Declaration. First, the notion of cultural rights is rather nebulous and ill-defined. Second, cultural rights are possessed by individuals. These two observations are central to how cultural rights are conceived in later documents.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ("ICESCR") attempts to further specify the nature of cultural rights. At first glance, it seemingly provides merely a vague restatement of cultural rights by recognizing "the right of everyone... to take part in cultural life." A closer examination, however, reveals that, in addition to the general grant of cultural rights, several other basic rights are placed within the context of cultural activities, including: rights to religion, work, protection of the family, and education. For example, the right to work is recognized within this document only when the right promotes "cultural development." Thus, the ICESCR recognizes that a group's "cultural right" is at least partially defined by its practices in the areas of religion, work, family, and education. According to the ICESCR's rather unusual views, however, the content of cultural rights consists of rights bestowed onto individuals.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ("ICCPR") similarly recognizes and offers protection to cul-

---

39 Cf. DONNELLY, supra note 33, at 154-55.
40 Cf. DONNELLY, supra note 33, at 156-58.
42 Indeed, the ICESCR was meant to be interpretive of the UDHR's provisions. FRANK NEWMAN & DAVID WEISSBRODT, INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS 2-3 (1992).
43 ICESCR, supra note 34, at art. 15, para. 1, 993 U.N.T.S. at 9.
44 ICESCR, supra note 34, at art. 2, para. 2, 993 U.N.T.S. at 5.
45 ICESCR, supra note 34, at art. 6, para. 1, 993 U.N.T.S. at 6.
46 ICESCR, supra note 34, at art. 10, para. 1, 993 U.N.T.S. at 7.
47 ICESCR, supra note 34, at art. 13, para. 1, 993 U.N.T.S. at 8.
48 ICESCR, supra note 34, at art. 6, para. 2, 993 U.N.T.S. at 6.
49 This definition is similar to that of Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (ed. 1988). "The integrated pattern of human behavior which includes thought, speech, action and artifacts and depends upon [the human] capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations." Id. at 336.
50 See ICESCR, supra note 34, at art. 15, 993 U.N.T.S. at 9.
51 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ("ICCPR"), Dec. 16,
tural rights. It provides for the right of people, "in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language." While this provision directly addresses the rights of minority groups, and arguably is more widely applicable, the rights remain limited. The rights given are individual and are for "persons belonging to such minorities," rather than for groups of minorities.

The cultural rights expressed in the International Bill of Rights also are recognized in several regional documents and in a number of treaties. Especially noteworthy is the emphasis placed on protecting cultures by the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. In addition, numerous cultural protections have been recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite this recognition, protections


52 Id. at art. 27.
53 See Parker, supra note 34, at 213 n.52 (citing authority).
54 See Parker, supra note 34, at 213 n.52.
55 For an historical analysis of article 27, see MARC J. BOSSUVT, GUIDE TO THE "TRAVAUX PRÉPARATOIRES" OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS 493-98 (1987) (giving no indication that the right was other than to be bestowed onto individuals). For a recent analysis of the term "minority" applied in international law, see Study on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minority, E.91.XIV.2, 1-15 (1992); see also id. at 16-103 (examining minority rights in terms of persons belonging to ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities).


58 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Dec. 18, 1979, art. 1, U.N. Doc. A/RES/34/180 (1979), 19 I.L.M. 33, 36. The Women's Convention is particularly interesting, for it also aims to have nation states modify "social and cultural patterns of conduct . . . [to achieve] the elimination of . . . practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women." Id. at art. 5(a), 19 I.L.M. at 37.

59 Convention on the Rights of the Child, supra note 2, at arts. 4, 29, 30, & 31
remain limited, both in scope\textsuperscript{60} and in application.\textsuperscript{61}

Although nations have agreed that cultural rights do indeed exist, these rights are restricted because they are framed in terms of individual rights. Despite this limitation, group rights in fact have been recognized and offered international protection. At least in theory, social and cultural rights may take precedence over individual rights when the rights of “peoples” are involved.

The notion of peoples’ rights has a venerable tradition. For example, the U.N. Charter provides protection for sovereignty rights by delineating “respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples” as one purpose for the United Nations.\textsuperscript{62} The ICESCR also explicitly aims to protect peoples’ sovereignty when determining whether to maintain cultural practices. It provides that “[a]ll peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they may freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”\textsuperscript{63} The ICCPR contains an identical provision: “All peoples have a right of self-determination.”\textsuperscript{64} In addition, as they have with cultural rights, several regional documents have adopted provisions that specifically protect “peoples” from state interference with their practices.\textsuperscript{65}

Although definitely recognizing and offering protection to

\begin{itemize}
\item [\textsuperscript{60}] For example, although the Convention on the Rights of the Child does give deference to cultural traditions, it clearly places emphasis on the best interests of the child. \textit{Id.} at 1459; \textit{see also} Levesque, \textit{supra} note 2, at 288-91 (detailing the potentially radical impact the "best interests" standard would have had on American jurisprudence).
\item [\textsuperscript{61}] For example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes cultural rights, but they are granted to children as individual rights. Convention on the Rights of the Child, \textit{supra} note 2, at arts. 30, 31.
\item [\textsuperscript{62}] U.N. \textit{CHARTER}, art. 1, § 2.
\item [\textsuperscript{63}] ICESCR, \textit{supra} note 34, at art. 1, para. 1, 993 U.N.T.S. at 5.
\item [\textsuperscript{64}] ICCPR, \textit{supra} note 51, at art. 1(1). The right, however, is limited in that it is to be respected “in conformity with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.” \textit{Id.} at art. 1(3).
\item [\textsuperscript{65}] \textit{See, e.g.}, \textit{AFRICAN CHARTER}, \textit{supra} note 56, at art. 17(3), 21 I.L.M. at 61 ("The promotion and protection of morals and traditional values recognized by the community shall be the duty of the State."); \textit{id.} at art. 20, 21 I.L.M. at 62 ("All peoples shall have the right to . . . self-determination. They shall . . . pursue their . . . social development according to the policy they have freely chosen.").
\end{itemize}
"peoples," the nature and extent of these rights also remain unsettled. When first included in the Covenants, the nature of these rights was not defined, and the *Travaux Préparatoires*, a work on the legislative history of the Covenants, shed little light on their contents. It was not clear what constituted "peoples" and their general right to "self-determination." There are at least two plausible alternative interpretations of peoples' self-determination rights. In theory, it is possible to distinguish between "external" self-determination—by which a people determine their future international status—and "internal" self-determination—by which a people may influence the internal political order of the nation state in which they live. The extent to which either approach recognizes and adequately protects "peoples'" rights remains limited. For example, the drawback of the "external" approach is that the group rights found in the documents discussed above are protected through individual rights. The limitation of the "internal" approach is that international law generally only recognizes nation states, not groups within states.

---

66 See, e.g., BOSSUYT, supra note 55, at 33-38 (providing the history of the meaning of self-determination).


68 For an analysis of this clause of the covenant, see Antonio Cassese, The Self-Determination of Peoples, in THE INTERNATIONAL BILL OF RIGHTS: THE COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS 92-113 (Louis Henkin ed., 1981). Cassese notes that the right does not entail the right of minorities to self-determination. Id. at 96. He further notes that the right to self-determination refers to sets of provisions found in the Covenants, such as peaceful assembly, vote, etc. Id. at 97-98; see also Mary E. Turpel, Indigenous Peoples’ Rights of Political Participation and Self-Determination: Recent International Legal Developments and the Continuing Struggle for Recognition, 25 CORNELL INT’L L.J. 579, 601 (1992) (concluding that the recent political attention has “done little to resolve the conflicts between indigenous peoples and states”).


71 See, e.g., Lynn H. Miller, GLOBAL ORDER: VALUES AND POWER IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS 19-128, 169-98 (1994) (examining the Wesphalian approach, principle reliance on nation-state sovereignty, to ensure international order and human rights); Richard Falk, The Rights of Peoples (In Particular Indigenous Peoples), in
Developments since the Covenants were adopted also do not favor peoples' self-determination from recognized nation states. In practice, the internationally recognized right to self-determination, despite its seeming breadth, has been treated as an extremely narrow right. Commentators agree that self-determination has evolved to focus specifically on decolonialization.

The limited purpose of such self-determination has taken a decisive turn, however. The right to cultural and peoples' self-determination has reemerged as a universal principle. In 1989, the United Nation's International Labor Organization adopted the Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries ("Peoples' Convention"). The Peoples' Convention is currently the most comprehensive and ambitious approach to protecting indigenous and tribal cultures. Not surprisingly, it focuses on self-definition.
(rather than self-determination) by giving groups the right to participate actively in national decision-making and to govern their own economic, social and cultural development.\textsuperscript{77}

Despite the far reach of the Peoples' Convention, the rights found therein remain limited. For example, indigenous peoples have the "right to retain their own customs and institutions" only as long as they are not "incompatible with fundamental rights defined by the national legal system . . . [or] with internationally recognized human rights."\textsuperscript{78} Even the definition of "peoples" is limited and "shall not be construed as having any implications as regards the rights which may attach to the term under international law."\textsuperscript{79} In addition, the Convention generally does not recognize peoples' rights; it is mainly a "procedural convention."\textsuperscript{80} Even when rights actually are recognized, they are limited.\textsuperscript{81}

Given that the Peoples' Convention, in the words of one commentator, is "seriously inadequate,"\textsuperscript{82} the most important forum to emerge out of the peoples' self-determination movement has been that of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations.\textsuperscript{83} The Working Group has been

\textsuperscript{77}Barsh, supra note 75, at 211-34 (summarizing the major parts of the Convention). The extensiveness of the rights leads to the interpretation that, although the Convention does not refer explicitly to a right of self-determination, self-government, or autonomy, it plainly achieves the same result indirectly. Cf. id. at 215. The Convention guarantees respect for indigenous institutions, which together amount to recognition of indigenous peoples as distinct societies possessed of their own representative institutions. As Barsh notes, the Convention's use of "peoples" was used in a way of affirming that indigenous peoples had an identity of their own and that they comprised organized societies rather than groups of individuals sharing some racial or ethnic characteristic. Id. The International Labor Organization secretariat clearly stated, however, that no right to self-determination had been created. Id. at 231-34.

\textsuperscript{78}Peoples' Convention, supra note 75, at art. 8(2).

\textsuperscript{79}Peoples' Convention, supra note 75, at art. 1(3).


\textsuperscript{81}For example, the Convention recognizes cultural rights which generally are limited and linked to language and education. See Barsh, supra note 75, at 230-31. In terms of cultural rights, protections also are championed to this extent. See Raidza Torres, The Rights of Indigenous Populations: The Emerging International Norm, 16 YALE J. INT'L L. 127, 159 nn.162-65 (1991) (focusing on the protection of native languages).

\textsuperscript{82}Berman, supra note 80, at 193.

\textsuperscript{83}The Working Group was created by the United Nations Economic and Social
charged with the task of remediying current limitations in international law and developing international legal standards for indigenous human rights.\textsuperscript{84}

The most notable and potentially revolutionary achievement of the Working Group has been the drafting of a Universal Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples ("Peoples' Declaration").\textsuperscript{85} Unfortunately, the current draft contains an assortment of provisions which, as a whole, do not clarify how peoples' rights should be approached.\textsuperscript{86} The majority of provisions simply bestow the rights onto "indigenous peoples," without specifying whether these rights are possessed by the group or the individual. For example, the draft provides that "indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination."\textsuperscript{87} Some provisions state that indigenous peoples have a collective right,\textsuperscript{88} while others bestow rights onto "every indigenous in-

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{85} See Williams, Jr., supra note 76, at 665-66.
\item \textsuperscript{87} Id. at art. 3; see also id. at arts. 11-14, 16-36.
\item \textsuperscript{88} Id. at art. 6 (collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Lastly, some provisions approach indigenous peoples' rights in terms of both individual and collective rights. For example, the Peoples' Declaration proclaims that "[i]ndigenous peoples have the collective and individual right not to be subjected to ethnocide and cultural genocide" and "to maintain and develop their distinct identities and characteristics."

Although the Peoples' Convention could lead to greater protection of cultural rights, and the Peoples' Declaration, though unenforceable, could foster greater recognition of collective rights, it remains to be seen how expansively rights will be interpreted. Moreover, several international trends clearly limit the expansion of these rights. First, when indigenous peoples litigate their "peoples'" rights in national courts, they tend to lose. Second, the unprecedented move toward one global order has generally resulted in social development resembling the Westernization of nation states.

---

89 Id. at art. 5 (individual has the right to a nationality).
90 Id. at art. 7.
91 Working Group Report, supra note 86, at art. 8.
92 Barsh, supra note 75, at 234-35 (arguing that if properly advocated, the Convention could lead to considerable protections for indigenous peoples' rights).
93 Declarations are not enforceable; they do not have implementing mechanisms. See supra note 36.
94 Cf. Iorns, supra note 80, at 199.
95 The clearest example of peoples tending to lose is the recent litigation in the U.S. Supreme Court. For example, in recent years the Court has consistently sided on the side of the plenary power of the federal government over Indian affairs and has accepted the proposition that "all aspects of Indian sovereignty are subject to defeasance by Congress." Escondido Mut. Water Co. v. LaJolla Band of Mission Indians, 466 U.S. 765, 788 n.30 (1984). For a discussion of the frequent use of the phrase, see Robert A. Williams, Jr., Learning Not to Live With Eurocentric Myopia: A Reply to Professor Laurence's Learning to Live With the Plenary Power of Congress Over the Indian Nations, 30 ARIZ. L. REV. 439, 446 (1988). As a result, the Court has authorized the destruction of Indian religious sites and practices, suppression of traditional forms of tribal government, forced removal of Indian children from their homes and involuntary sterilization of Indian women. See Williams, Jr., supra note 76, at 692-93 nn.112-13 (citing Supreme Court cases and federal government policies having the above effect).
96 Cf. VINCENT, supra note 33, 92-108 (examining the move toward a "one world society"); see also Delbruck, supra note 74, at 724-25 (concluding that "international law is changing into the 'internal law' of a World Community"); Michael Smith, Modernization, Globalization and the Nation-State, in GLOBAL POLITICS 253-68 (Anthony G. McGrew et al. eds., 1992) (examining the move toward a "global society" and its effect on nation states).

Significantly, at the international level, interest in furthering indigenous
ditionally, despite the international law's movement away from its laissez-faire approach to intranation-state behavior, international relations remain concerned with laws between states, while individuals and peoples continue to enjoy benefits only through the medium of their nationality, by their belonging to states. Lastly, the prevailing theme of all international human rights documents rests on respect for the dignity of persons and their own individual, human rights. Such notions of individuality and human dignity tend to be Western concepts which are likely to continue dominating international law. There is little room for indigenous concepts of personhood and individuality. Given these trends, it is difficult to re-

peoples' rights continues to be sporadic. See Report of Working Group on indigenous Populations 11th Sess. at 38, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1993/29 (pointing out that the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples, 1993, "was the poorest and smallest event of its kind in the history of the United Nations").

97 For an examination of the Grotian approach to international law, see generally Cornelius F. Murphy, Jr., The Grotian Vision of World Order, 76 AM. J. INT'L L. 477 (1982). See also Miller, supra note 71, at 30-31, 209-17 (describing the impact of Hugo Grotius, the father of modern internal law, and his theory that the international system should be characterized by a laissez-faire system of sovereign states).

Precisely because of the Grotian approach to international law, human rights have traditionally been excluded from international scrutiny. International relations typically do not involve a state's treatment of its own citizens. The increasing recognition of human rights has led to the restriction of state sovereignty and the principle of non-intervention, indicating changes in international legal order. See supra note 71 and accompanying text.

98 See, e.g., U.N. CHARTER, art. 2, ¶ 7 ("Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter . . . ."); see also Maivan C. Lam, Making Room for Peoples at the United Nations: Thoughts Provoked by Indigenous Claims to Self-Determination, 25 CORNELL INT'L L.J. 603, 621-22 (1992). But see supra notes 68-76 and accompanying text.


100 See Alan Howard, Cultural Paradigms, History, and the Search for Identity in Oceania, in CULTURAL IDENTITY AND ETHNICITY IN THE PACIFIC 259-78 (Jocelyn Linnekin & Lin Poyer eds., 1990) (describing the differences between Western and Oceanic perspectives of human nature and distinguishing the Western concept as physically bound, genetically determined, self-actualizing and individual); John D. Waiko, Human Rights: The Melanesian View, 6 HUM. RTS. TEACHING 18, 18-26 (1987) (detailing differences between Western and Melanesian cultures). As one renowned commentator has characterized it, instead of being thought of as "individuals," persons in these cultures are better considered to be consociates. CLIFFORD GEERTZ, THE INTERPRETATION OF CULTURES 364-67 (1973). As we have seen in the
main confident that any new declaration or convention bestowing rights on indigenous peoples will effect unprecedented changes in international relations.

Examining the sexual use of children from a purely international law perspective demonstrates that children's individual rights must be respected, even when they conflict with their culture's rights. The reasoning is clear: the right that forms the basis of international law is respect for human dignity and individual autonomy. Simply put, although nation states increasingly may have duties to protect certain cultural practices and groups, decisions regarding which customs will be preserved must be oriented toward the promotion and protection of universal human rights recognized in international law. The preservation of cultures, however, is not the only formidable obstacle to ensuring children's right to protection from sexual maltreatment. Even when international law seems especially well-suited to address issues of sexual maltreatment, other concerns inevitably arise. The role of economics in sexual exploitation is a powerful case in point.

II. CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION: CONFLICTS BETWEEN ECONOMIC AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

The sexual exploitation of children may be defined as maltreatment for economic gain, whether to benefit specific individuals, communities or societies. The extent, causes and consequences of child sexual exploitation are complex and require a variety of international protections for children. Despite the apparent amenability to international regulation and reaction, the rise of child sexual exploitation is unlikely to be stemmed in the near future. The international community has failed to appreciate children's basic right to be free from sexual maltreatment and has not addressed the increasing case of the Sambia, culture plays an important part in the symbolic construction of the individual, with its own symbols, meanings and indigenous categories. See supra notes 31-43 and accompanying text.  

101 Sexual exploitation only recently has become a global issue, particularly for a number of Asian countries where the problems are linked to "sex tourism" and the sale of children for sexual exploitation. See Reports of the Trafficking in Children Between Lao Peoples Democratic, Myanmar, China, Cambodia and Thailand, U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/1993/SR.56.
exploitation of children.

One of the most devastating aspects of globalization has been the escalating rise of sex-tourism and its direct contribution to an increase in child sexual exploitation. Over one million children a year are forced into the sex market.\textsuperscript{102} The vast majority of these child prostitutes are concentrated in poor countries.\textsuperscript{103} For instance, it is estimated that there are 800,000 child prostitutes in Thailand, 400,000 in India, and 250,000 in Brazil.\textsuperscript{104} In the Philippines, estimates range between 40,000 and 60,000, two-thirds of whom are male.\textsuperscript{105} In Sri Lanka, about 30,000 boys aged six to fifteen are thought to work as prostitutes.\textsuperscript{106} Although poor countries have been the area of international interest when examining sexual exploitation, even the wealthiest of nations have large numbers of children trapped in prostitution. Estimates of the number of child prostitutes in the United States, for instance, range from 90,000 to 300,000.\textsuperscript{107}

Although children take part in sex tourism in several other countries,\textsuperscript{108} the situation in Thailand is arguably the most excessive. Children below sixteen years of age make up 40% of the total number of prostitutes in Thailand.\textsuperscript{109} Of the estimated 800,000 child prostitutes,\textsuperscript{110} most are between four-
teen and sixteen years of age, and some are as young as ten.111 Because the situation in Thailand has reached such overwhelming proportions, it has been the subject of considerable research. The situation illustrates well the complexity of exploitation and the lack of international response. For example, one of the most striking aspects of research is the revelation that recruiting agents no longer need to apply much physical violence to lure children and youth into the sex trade.112 This is largely because parents have become accomplices to the exploitation of their children. According to the Center for the Protection of Children’s Rights, in 1989, 63% of girls under sixteen were brought to prostitution by their own parents; 21% were brought by neighbors or friends who also were sending their children to the brothels; 16% were brought by agents.113

Although desperate family poverty continues to play a role,114 it has been suggested that it is no longer the only root cause of child prostitution. Material objects and the evidence of good incomes of many prostitutes are factors that encourage increasingly more children into the trade.115 Moreover, child

---

111 Skrobanek, supra note 110, at 181.

112 Skrobanek, supra note 110, at 181. Popular press reports, however, focus on the abduction of children. See, e.g., Child Abuse Targeted, ATLANTA J. & CONST., June 1, 1994, at A7 (noting that of the 800,000 child prostitutes in Thailand, “many [had been] deceived into their work or abducted” but failing to note the roles of families and communities in child exploitation).

113 Gayle Reaves, Trading Away Youth: Impoverished Thai Parents Sell Girls into Prostitution, DALLAS MORNING NEWS, Mar. 21, 1993, at 1A (providing a thorough examination of the nature and crisis in child prostitution in Thailand and how poverty stricken families traffic their own children into prostitution).

114 Selling children into prostitution earns families “rapid cash income for the exchange of expensive electric appliances such as colour television[s], frigidaire[s], or fashionable houses.” Skrobanek, supra note 110, at 180; see also TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN, supra note 111, at 12 (noting cases in which fathers exchanged their daughters for 125cc motorbikes); Charles H. McCaghy & Charles Hou, Family Affiliation and Prostitution in a Cultural Context: Career Onsets of Taiwanese Prostitutes, 23 ARCHIVES SEXUAL BEHAV. 251, 259-64 (1994) (analyzing the typology of career onsets for prostitution and noting that only 10% mentioned negative family experiences as precipitating factors in the decision to enter prostitution and finding that over one-half of the sample listed familial obligations and upgrading personal financial status as primary factors for entry into prostitution).
prostitution has become a way of life for several rural villages. Indeed, children are no longer only exploited to support themselves and their families: some villages depend on child prostitution to fill a "common public fund," which is used to pay for such resources as village schools and equipment. The economic aspects of child economics, therefore, cannot be ignored. Estimates are that sex-tourism has become a $10-billion-a-year industry, which clearly has been exacerbated by globalization and the easy availability of international transportation. Given that sex tourism involves several nations, it would seem amenable to international prohibition, regulation and intervention. Yet, as discussed below, international response remains inadequate. This is rather intriguing since, unlike situations involving cultural practices, international law has long prohibited the exploitation of children.

The international prohibition against child sexual exploitation dates back to the League of Nations and to general provisions prohibiting the exploitation of children. Prior to the current international statement on child sexual exploitation, there were at least three arguments that could have been used to obtain an international response to child sexual exploitation. These approaches provide a useful comparison to the current international statement prohibiting exploitation, particularly since some are much more persuasive and extensive.

The first explicit and enforceable prohibition against general exploitation is found in the ICESCR, which obliges states parties to make "punishable by law" the employment of children in work harmful to their morals and health. Although

---

116 Skrobanek, supra note 110, at 181.
117 Skrobanek, supra note 110, at 180-81.
118 Cf. Merle English, Some U.S. Tourists Use Child Prostitutes, NEWSDAY, June 27, 1993 at 3 (citing figures and the fight against tourism); Goldstein, supra note 108, at 8 (noting sex tourism is Thailand's "number one foreign currency earner").
119 See O'GRADY, supra note 102, at 138.
121 ICESCR, supra note 34, art. 10, para. 3, 993 U.N.T.S. at 7. Article 10(3) provides the following protection: "Children and young persons should be protected from economic and social exploitation. Their employment in work harmful to their
the ICESCR contains provisions against exploitation, the extent to which it could be used to combat sexual exploitation is inherently limited by its failure to identify sexual exploitation. The failure to link sexual exploitation to work is also seen in a number of other documents which do not prohibit sexual exploitation specifically.122

The second approach proposes that states are under a duty to prevent and eradicate sexual exploitation to the extent that states must prohibit degrading treatment.123 On its face, it would seem that child sexual exploitation could be construed to fall within the concept of degrading treatment. In reality, however, the argument is difficult to make. For example, because sexual exploitation of children has become a way of life for several communities, it would be difficult to argue against the voluntariness of individual children’s decisions when they are brought into exploitative situations by their parents and are responsible for the economic well-being of their families and villages.124 Consent becomes difficult to gauge, given the confluence of factors weighing into the equation, including entry

morals or health or dangerous to life or likely to hamper their normal development should be punishable by law. States should also set age limits below which the paid employment of child labour should be prohibited and punishable by law.” Note that the Universal Declaration, although focusing on the inherent dignity of all, had no explicit provisions against exploitation. Even if it did, declarations are not enforceable. See supra note 36.

122 For example, the following do not include provisions against sexual exploitation: AFRICAN CHARTER, supra note 56; American Convention on Human Rights, supra note 56; and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, supra note 56. See also CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN RIGHTS, supra note 18, at 147.

123 Several documents place states parties under an obligation to prohibit degrading treatment. See ICCPR, supra note 51, at art. 7; UDHR, supra note 34, at art. 5.

It is important to emphasize that there is a convention entirely devoted to the prevention of degrading treatment. See 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, reprinted in HUMAN RIGHTS: A COMPILATION OF INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS 233 (1993) [hereinafter Convention for the Suppression of Traffic & Prostitution]. This Convention does protect children from exploitation. It remains relatively weak, however, because it states explicitly that the offenses “shall in each State be defined, prosecuted and punished in conformity with its domestic law.” Id. at art. 12. For other weaknesses of the Convention, see Working Group on Slavery, supra note 103, at 11 (noting that there has yet to be a committee to monitor the application and implementation of the Convention). See also id. at 36.

124 See Reaves, supra note 114, at A7.
into prostitution because of poverty, family disintegration, and migration from rural to urban areas.\textsuperscript{125}

Similar to the exploitation-as-degradation argument is the contention that some forms of child sexual exploitation could be characterized appropriately as institutionalized slavery and may even constitute a slave trade.\textsuperscript{126} Pursuant to such instruments as the ICCPR\textsuperscript{127} and the American Convention,\textsuperscript{128} nation states are under a duty to eradicate immediately those specific instances of sexual exploitation which amount to slavery or slavery-like practices. Indeed, even states not party to those Conventions have, pursuant to customary international law, an obligation to prohibit slavery-like practices.\textsuperscript{129}

The exploitation-as-slavery argument has potentially powerful and far-reaching consequences. Under this argument, all nations are under an obligation to assist in the eradication of child sexual exploitation. At a minimum, such obligations would include a nation's stopping its citizens from taking part in sex tourism. Unfortunately, by this logic virtually all nations are violating one of the most basic human rights since only one country—Germany—has opted to prohibit its citizens from indulging in the child sexual exploitation trade.\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{125} See supra notes 114-15 and accompanying text; see also Ove Narvesen, The Sexual Exploitation of Children in Developing Countries 65-66 (1989) (concluding that the following are the primary causal factors in child sexual exploitation: urbanization, colonialism, military expansionism, commercialization, tourism and restrictive religious and cultural traditions).

\textsuperscript{126} For example, some have proposed that incarceration into brothels amounts to such action. See Van Bueren, supra note 9, at 55.

\textsuperscript{127} ICCPR, supra note 51, at art. 8(1) ("No one shall be held in slavery; slavery and the slave-trade in all forms shall be prohibited."); id. at art. 8(2) ("No one shall be held in servitude."); id. at art. 8(3)(a) ("No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour.").

\textsuperscript{128} American Convention, supra note 56, at art. 6(1) ("No one shall be subject to slavery or to involuntary servitude, which are prohibited in all their forms, as are the slave trade and traffic in women.").

\textsuperscript{129} Genocide, slavery, murder and the "disappearance" of individuals, prolonged arbitrary detention, systematic racial discrimination, and consistent patterns of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights are identified as falling within the customary international law of human rights. Restatement (Third) of the Foreign Relations Law of the United States § 702 (1987). The Restatement also describes the source of customary international law as deriving from "a general and consistent practice of States followed by them from a sense of legal obligation." Id. at § 102(2).

\textsuperscript{130} Only Germany currently prohibits "sex tours" into Asia, although Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand are considering similar legislation. See Teresa Ooi,
Given the lack of international response and lack of explicit protection against child sexual exploitation, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been a welcome attempt to clarify the nature of sexual exploitation and the international duties involved. To that end, the Convention has been a remarkable achievement. For example, Article 34 explicitly urges nation states to prevent the inducement or coercion of children into unlawful sexual activity, the exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices, and the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials. In addition, Articles 35 and 36 respectively offer protection against the “abduction, . . . sale of or traffic in children,” and against “other forms of exploitation to any aspects of the child’s welfare.” Lastly, Article 32 “recognizes the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation,” while Article 39 forcefully states that “States Parties

Australia Seeks to Outlaw Sex Tours, STRAITS TIMES, May 20, 1994, at 9. France has recently approved a draft law making citizens liable to prosecution at home for sex offenses committed abroad. See GUARDIAN, Dec. 11, 1993, at 18 (noting that travel agencies actually advertise trips for the purpose of having sexual relations with girls in Thailand and boys in the Philippines—although sex with children is illegal in France). Even if these laws are passed, their effectiveness is questionable. See, e.g., Rudolf Grimm, supra note 105, at 5G (noting that 50 to 70% of German men visiting Thailand, Kenya, South Korea and the Philippines do so for sex).

131 Convention on the Rights of the Child, supra note 2, art. 34. Article 34 reads:

States parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

(a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
(b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
(c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

For a legislative history of article 34, see THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD: A GUIDE TO THE “TRAVAUX PRÉPARATOIRES” 429-37 (Sharon Detrick ed., 1992) [hereinafter TRAVAUX PRÉPARATOIRES].

132 Convention on the Rights of the Child, supra note 2, art. 35.

133 Convention on the Rights of the Child, supra note 2, art 36.

134 The Convention further continues by stating that the child is also to be protected “from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.” Id.
shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse . . . ."\textsuperscript{135}

Through these five articles explicitly addressing exploitation, the Convention has made it clear that all states parties are obliged to take all national, bilateral and multilateral measures to combat sexual exploitation.\textsuperscript{136} Yet, these extensive protections remain unsatisfactory. For example, the focus on "exploitative use" of children for prostitution and pornography\textsuperscript{137} leaves open the interpretation that the use of children for prostitution and pornographic purposes could be construed as non-exploitative.\textsuperscript{138} As the language now stands, the Convention could be interpreted as allowing children to be "exploited" so long as they consent.\textsuperscript{139} In addition, the prohibitions against inducement or coercion of children into unlawful sexual practices take only a limited approach to combating exploitation.\textsuperscript{140} Lastly and most significantly, the Convention does

\begin{itemize}
\item 135 Convention on the Rights of the Child, supra note 2.
\item 136 Note that the previous children's declarations, the Declaration of Geneva and the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child only had provided that children must be protected against all forms of exploitation. See Levesque, supra note 1, at 209-11.
\item 137 The Convention on the Rights of the Child, supra note 2, at art. 34(b) & 34(c).
\item 138 This is reinforced by the fact that the Netherlands attempted unsuccessfully to delete the word "exploitative." See TRAVAUX PRÉPARATOIRES, supra note 131, at 433.
\item 139 As we have seen, children seem to be "consenting." For many, it essentially has become a way of life. See supra notes 114-15 and accompanying text.
\item The focus on consent and unlawful activity was necessary, because, for example, the age of majority varies across nation states and, as the Convention covers children up to the age of eighteen, it could in effect prohibit sexual activity between husbands and wives under the age of 18. See TRAVAUX PRÉPARATOIRES, supra note 131, at 450. But see id. at 50-51 (noting that the delegation of China and USSR found it difficult to accept the inclusion of "unlawful," since they could not imagine that children's sexual practices could be lawful).
\item Despite this limitation, it is clear that there already exists international instruments aimed at the protection of children against being "procured, enticed or lead away for the purposes of prostitution . . . even with their consent." See Convention for the Suppression of Traffic & Prostitution, art. 1, supra note 123, at 234.
\item 140 For example, there are no provisions against distribution of child pornography. This recommendation was made but rejected. For legislative history to that effect, see TRAVAUX PRÉPARATOIRES, supra note 131, at 447-48 (the representative of Norway proposed that "specific reference be made to the commercial distribution and sale of child pornography which was an important aspect of sexual exploita-
not prohibit children who have reached the age of sexual emancipation to become prostitutes or engage in pornography. This limitation is significant because many countries either have no laws relating to emancipation or consider children as young as thirteen to be sexually emancipated.\footnote{According to a survey conducted by the International Catholic Child Bureau, legal protections for children against such exploitation as child pornography vary widely. \textit{See} Douglas Hodgson, \textit{Sex Tourism and Child Prostitution in Asia: Legal Responses and Strategies}, 19 MELB. U. L. REV. 512, 523 (1994) (finding that a major obstacle to protecting children from child prostitution is the lack of uniformity concerning children's ages of consent and noting that several countries allow children as young as 12 or 13 to engage in sexual relations). Although countries had passed laws protecting children from exploitation; the minimum age of consent varied significantly. For example, in Thailand, there was no minimum age of sexual consent for boys, and girls were protected only up to the age of 13. \textit{Id.} It further noted that laws dealing with child pornography dealt mainly with offenses of production and distribution. \textit{Id.} For a sampling of different ages at which children are sexually emancipated, see David T. Evans, \textit{Falling Angels?—The Material Construction of Children as Sexual Citizens}, 2 INT'L J. CHILDREN'S RTS. 1, 6-9 (1994).}

Despite the limitations of these attempts to address the rights of children, it is clear that there are now distinct prohibitions and protections against sexual exploitation. Unfortunately, though these arguments against sexual exploitation may be relatively strong, the complexity and pervasiveness of the problem eludes solutions even when strict mandates exist.\footnote{\textit{Paulo David, Review of The Sexual Exploitation of Children: Field Responses, 2 INT'L J. CHILDREN'S RTS. 116, 117 (1994) (reviewing the work of non-governmental organizations combatting child sexual exploitation and the major difficulties encountered in implementing programs).} For example, it would be difficult to argue that the government of Thailand condones sex tourism. It is certainly aware of the problem\footnote{\textit{Goldstein, supra note 108, at 8 (noting that sex-tourism "goes on with the knowledge and sometimes connivance of governments").} and its negative consequences,\footnote{\textit{See, e.g., Editorial, GUARDIAN, Dec. 11, 1993, at 18 (noting that sex tourism has contributed immensely to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Thailand and has become uncontrollable among 13- to 20-year-old females).} and has reacted.\footnote{\textit{For example, the government of Thailand, in addition to commissioning research, \textit{see supra} note 110, also has recently instituted a number of programs to discourage child prostitution. \textit{See} Serrill, \textit{supra} note 4, at 52 (noting that Chuan Leekpai, the Thai prime minister, had announced a campaign to wipe out child prostitution). This rather progressive and ambitious program includes the following: (1) a public campaign to educate parents on possible violence against child prostitutes; (2) a revision of laws to enhance rights of children; (3) the provision of legal}} Yet, this exploitation continues at a
The current inability to stem the rise of child sexual exploitation compels two distressing conclusions. First, the usefulness of even clear mandates remains uncertain: even when strict standards warrant action, the international community does not necessarily respond. Second, calling attention to an escalating social problem does not automatically jolt the international community into action. The sexual maltreatment of children in Western societies exemplifies some of the barriers to eradication of such abuses. Whether sexual maltreatment can be appropriately addressed, even when there has been a societal commitment to its abolition, therefore remains to be seen.

III. THE SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN: RECONCILING FAMILY PRIVACY WITH INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

A. Responses to the Sexual Abuse of Children

Although the sexual abuse of children has been documented throughout history, societies' willingness to recognize the sexual use of children as abuse has varied considerably. In the United States, for example, even though child abuse was initially "discovered" in the early 1960s,\(^\text{147}\) it was not until the

---

\(^{146}\) See supra text and accompanying notes 109-17.

\(^{147}\) This discovery usually is attributed to Henry Kempe's 1962 address on the battered child to the American Medical Association. See Margaret A. Lynch, Child Abuse Before Kempe: An Historical Literature Review, 9 CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT 7 (1985); see also Beverly Gomes-Schwartz et al., Child Sexual Abuse: The Initial Effects 13-14 (1990) (providing a brief synopsis of the discovery of sexual abuse in the United States); Sandy K. Wurtele & Cindy L. Miller-Perrin, Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: Sharing the Responsibility 1-3 (1992) (briefly summarizing the development of the social recognition of child sexual abuse); Erna Olafson et al., Modern History of Child Sexual Abuse Awareness: Cycles of Discover...
late 1970s that child sexual abuse was perceived as a social problem requiring immediate attention.\textsuperscript{148} Since its discovery, the nature of sexual abuse has been controversial. A major dispute involves the definition of sexual abuse.\textsuperscript{149} The debate is significant because definitions dictate the extent to which abuse is recognized and the form social responses will take. Definitional concerns aside, however, other aspects of the nature of sexual abuse are highly controversial—particularly in areas relating to its causes, harm, treatment, and prevention—and often empirical evidence tends not to match public assumptions.

The scope of child sexual abuse has become difficult to gauge because incidence and prevalence studies paint different pictures.\textsuperscript{150} For example, the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse, basing their findings on their annual fifty-state survey of child-abuse reports, recently estimated that there are between 360,000 and 408,000 reports of sexual abuse filed annually; in 1992 this would account for a significant percentage of the almost three million reports of child maltreatment.\textsuperscript{151} The problem with these figures, however, is

\textsuperscript{148} GOMES-SCHWARTZ ET AL., supra note 147, at 14. Discovery refers to the process by which social problems are raised to the level of cultural observation, which allows for reactions by social, political and professional groups. In the case of child sexual abuse, child advocates and feminist groups helped make the general public and professionals aware of the prevalence of child sexual abuse in the 1970s. See generally JEFFREY J. HAUGAARD & N. DICKON REPPECCI, THE SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO CURRENT KNOWLEDGE AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES 3-5 (1988).

\textsuperscript{149} The classic definition of sexual abuse was offered by Henry Kempe: “involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not fully comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violates the social taboos of family roles.” Henry Kempe, Incest and Other Forms of Sexual Abuse, in THE BATTERED CHILD 198 (Henry Kempe & Ray E. Helfer eds., 1980). Cases in which children are raped or otherwise sexually abused by their peers or children younger than themselves are often discounted as instances of child sexual abuse. Diana E.H. Russell, The Incidence and Prevalence of Intrafamilial and Extrafamilial Sexual Abuse of Female Children, in HANDBOOK ON SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN: ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT ISSUES 19 (Lenore E.A. Walker ed., 1988); see also WURTELE & MILLER-PERRIN, supra note 147, at 3-6 (noting the diverse definitions of child sexual abuse).

\textsuperscript{150} Incidence studies examine “the number of new cases occurring within a specific time period, usually a year.” WURTELE & MILLER-PERRIN, supra note 147, at 6. Prevalence studies examine “the proportion of a population that reports having been sexually victimized during childhood.” Id.

\textsuperscript{151} For current trends in child abuse reporting and fatalities, see Karen
that a large number of reports are never substantiated. Existing estimates of substantiated cases are considerably lower. For example, the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, for the year 1992, reports "only" 918,263 substantiated cases of child maltreatment, of which 14% involved sexual abuse.\footnote{152}

Most professionals believe that incidence figures underestimate the scope of the problem, a proposition supported by prevalence figures.\footnote{163} Prevalence reports, which would measure the percentage of the population reporting sexual victimization in childhood, range from 7% to 62% for girls, and 3% to 16% for boys.\footnote{154} These reports also consistently show that 25 to 30% of sexually abused children are under the age of seven and the modal age of such abuse is ten years.\footnote{155} Despite such differences in estimates, it is clear that maltreatment is gaining increasing recognition as a social issue. The dramatic increase in reports of maltreatment—331% from 1976 to 1992—reflects this growing awareness.\footnote{156}

\footnote{152} McCurdy & Deborah Daro, Child Maltreatment: A National Survey of Reports and Fatalities, 9 J. INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE 75, 77-81 (1994) (detailing the changes in reporting since the early 1980s).


\footnote{154} WURTELE & MILLER-PERRIN, supra note 147, at 7; see also David Finkelhor & Gail L. Zellman, Flexible Reporting Options for Skilled Child Abuse Professionals, 15 CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT 335, 335-41 (1991) (noting that over 40% of mandated reporters violate reporting laws and proposing solutions for improving compliance); David Finkelhor, The Main Problem is Still Underreporting, Not Overreporting, in CURRENT CONTROVERSIES ON FAMILY VIOLENCE 273, 273-85 (Richard J. Gelles & Donileen R. Loseke eds., 1993) (examining reasons why large numbers of neglected and abused children never find their way to child protective records).

\footnote{155} WURTELE & MILLER-PERRIN, supra note 147, at 8; see also Carol R. Hartman & Ann W. Burgess, Sexual Abuse of Children: Causes and Consequence, in CHILD MALTREATMENT: THEORY AND RESEARCH ON THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCE OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT 95, 98-99 (Dante Cicchetti & Vicki Carlson eds., 1989) (reporting findings from incidence and prevalence studies).

\footnote{156} N. Dickon Reppucci & Jeffrey J. Haugaard, Problems with Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs, in CURRENT CONTROVERSIES ON FAMILY VIOLENCE 306 (Richard J. Gelles & Donileen R. Loseke eds., 1993).

\footnote{152} DHHS, supra note 152, at 9-10. Similar trends have been noted in other countries. See, e.g., Carol-Ann Hooper, Child Sexual Abuse and the Regulation of Women: Variations on a Theme, in REGULATING WOMANHOOD: HISTORICAL ESSAYS ON MARRIAGE, MOTHERHOOD AND SEXUALITY 53, 76 n.1 (Carol Smart ed., 1992) (noting that the number of children in child-protection registers in England and Wales had more than doubled from 1983 to 1987).
Definitional, prevalence, and incidence issues aside, the most controversial aspect of child sexual abuse has been the role of families. Contrary to popular press accounts, "stranger danger"—abuse by strangers—accounts for a relatively small percentage of abusive incidents.\textsuperscript{157} Epidemiological studies report that the majority of abused children are abused by either relatives or acquaintances. More controversial, however, is the belief that family members often are aware that the abuse is occurring.\textsuperscript{158} Because of such factors as families' involvement in perpetrating abuse and the "seduction process" which offenders use to entice children into a web of secrecy,\textsuperscript{159} it is generally believed that sexual abuse is a "predominantly secret, under-reported phenomena" that defies preventative attempts.\textsuperscript{160}

Attempts to prevent child sexual abuse also continue to be highly controversial. The major focus of prevention has placed primary responsibility on children. This approach has been appropriately criticized.\textsuperscript{161} In addition to the finding that

\textsuperscript{157} Roger J.R. Levesque, Sex Difference in the Experience of Child Sexual Victimization, 9 J. OF FAM. VIOLENCE 357, 362 (1991) (incidence study finding that less than 10% of sexually abused children were victimized by strangers); GOMES-SCHWARTZ ET AL., supra note 147, at 63 (noting that only 3% of abusers are strangers). \textit{But see} WURTELE & MILLER-PERRIN, supra note 147, at 13-14 (reporting that 25% of women and 34% of men reporting childhood abuse were abused by strangers); Hartman & Burgess, supra note 154, at 123.

\textsuperscript{158} The controversy revolves around popular notions that mothers are the silent accomplices in their children's abuse, despite a lack of solid empirical support. \textit{See}, e.g., GOMES-SCHWARTZ ET AL., supra note 147, at 109-31; \textit{see also id.} at 115-16 (concluding that "the majority of mothers responded to the revelation of sexual abuse in a reasonably appropriate manner"); Anne McGillivray, \textit{Expanding the Narrative of Child Sexual Abuse, 2 INT'L J. CHILDREN'S RTS.} 67, 72-77 (1994) (noting that mothers are simultaneously blamed for the abuse and expected as caregivers to prevent and disclose abuse).

\textsuperscript{159} \textit{See} Roland C. Summit, \textit{The Child Sexual Accommodation Syndrome, 7 CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT} 177 (1983).

\textsuperscript{160} Hartman & Burgess, supra note 154, at 122. The predominantly silent ecology of sexual abuse is exacerbated by the findings that over one-third of its victims show no symptomatology, that there is no specific syndrome in children who have been abused and that there is no single traumatizing process. \textit{See generally} Kathleen A. Kendall-Tackett et al., \textit{Impact of Sexual Abuse on Children: A Review and Synthesis of Recent Empirical Studies, 113 PSYCH. L. BULL.} 164 (1993) (reviewing the major empirical studies of child sexual abuse).

\textsuperscript{161} Gary B. Melton, \textit{The Improbability of Prevention of Sexual Abuse, in PREVENTION OF CHILD MALTREATMENT: DEVELOPMENTAL AND ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES,} 168, 168-89 (Diane J. Willis et al. eds., 1992); Reppucci & Haugaard, supra note 155, at 313-15 (reviewing evaluation of child sexual education programs and con-
there may be negative side effects associated with participation by children in sexual abuse prevention programs.\textsuperscript{162} the central finding is that neither evaluation research nor knowledge about children's development reveals any reason to believe that sexual abuse education programs are, or could be, effective in preventing abuse.\textsuperscript{163} Partly in reaction to these findings, there has been a theoretical move that focuses on the moral responsibility of every adult to protect children.\textsuperscript{164} The theory, however, has been difficult to implement: programs continue to focus on childhood education,\textsuperscript{165} and the inherent secrecy of sexual abuse has not changed.

The institutional response to child sexual abuse also has been controversial. Well-intentioned but misinformed professionals may do more harm than good.\textsuperscript{166} Once abuse has been
revealed, the system may not be "victim-friendly." Research has revealed several negative effects to being handled through various institutional systems, particularly the criminal justice and social service delivery systems.  

Research investigating the institutional effects on child sexual abuse victims remains limited and far from unequivocal. Although few child sexual abuse cases actually reach the trial stage, the criminal justice system has been the major institutional response.  

Ironically, instead of emphasizing the system's effect on children, several commentators have become preoccupied with the impact children are having on the criminal justice system. In particular, commentators have questioned the reliability of the testimony of child sexual abuse victims, and the children's levels of suggestibility. Those who have been concerned with what effects the justice system actually has on children report that results remain far from clear. Recent research reports have been counter-intuitive.

---

167 Hartman & Burgess, supra note 154, at 111 (reviewing the literature relating to the effects of institutional reactions to abuse). A notable effect is that about 40% of substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect receive no formal state intervention. McCurdy & Daro, supra note 151.

168 A study of criminal sexual abuse case processing in several metropolitan courts revealed that about one-third of identified cases of sexual abuse resulted in no charges and that a much lower proportion of cases were actually tried—9.4% in jurisdictions where cases could be directed for the treatment and 10.8% in jurisdictions with no diversion option. ELLEN GRAY, UNEQUAL JUSTICE: THE PROSECUTION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE 95, 98, 100 (1993).


170 See Desmond K. Runyan, The Emotional Impact of Societal Intervention into Child Abuse, in CHILD VICTIMS, CHILD WITNESSES: UNDERSTANDING AND IMPROVING TESTIMONY 263 (Gail S. Goodman & Bette L. Bottoms eds., 1993); Gail S. Good-
For example, despite previous thinking, going through the judicial process may actually help some victims. Likewise, older victims may have more negative reactions to testifying.

Given the current lack of scientific knowledge, generalizations about the institutional impact on victims may be meaningless, particularly considering the variations in children's experiences. The shortcomings of empirical research and failures in institutional responses have left child protection in a precarious position: eminent scholars note the growing "social problem fatigue" and the unexpected emergence of a backlash.

Although research results have challenged the appropriateness of virtually every response taken against sexual abuse, some generalizations may be rendered: (1) families are not the safe havens they are generally thought to be; (2) abuse tends to be underreported because it occurs within trusted relationships; (3) institutional responses are not always in the child's best interests; and (4) prevention programs should reach beyond individual children and their families.

B. Family Privacy vs. Individual Rights

The international community's response to sexual abuse does not have a long history. Child sexual abuse has only recently been recognized as a significant social problem. Fur-
thermore, events that occur within families are not usually the subject of international law; indeed, the family unit is afforded a considerable amount of protection from intervention by international law. \(^{177}\) Lastly, international law has heretofore not been well-suited to address the issue because private rights and actions traditionally have not been within the proper jurisdiction of international law. \(^{178}\)

Despite the hesitant and generally inappropriate response of international law to issues of family violence, recently it has offered explicit protections against child sexual abuse. These protections first appeared with the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. \(^{179}\) The Convention not only mentions sexual abuse in several articles, but also explicitly devotes Article 19 to responding to the protection of children from sexual abuse while in the care of parents, guardians, or others. \(^{180}\)

\(^{177}\) See UDHR, supra note 34, at art. 16, para. 3 ("The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State."); id. at art. 10, para. 1 ("The widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family, which is the natural and fundamental unit of society . . . ."); ICCPR, supra note 51, at art. 23(1) ("The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State."); Convention on the Rights of the Child, supra note 2, at arts. 5, 7, 9, 10, 18, 21, 22 (all of which refer to children’s right to a relationship with parents and to a family environment). Again, several regional covenants offer special protections to families. See AFRICAN CHARTER, supra note 56, at art. 18(1) ("The family shall be the natural unit and basis of society. It shall be protected by the State which shall take care of its physical health and moral[s]."); id. at art. 18(2) ("The State shall have the duty to assist the family which is the custodian of morals and traditional values recognized by the community."); American Convention on Human Rights, supra note 56, at art. 17 ("The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state.").

\(^{178}\) See supra notes 97-98. Traditionally, international law dealt with relationships among states; the current move is to include private actions.

\(^{179}\) Protections against sexual abuse are found in articles 19, 34, & 35 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, supra note 2. Neither the Declaration of Geneva (the first international document to deal with children’s rights) nor the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, mention sexual abuse. For an analysis of these instruments, see Levesque, supra note 1, at 209-12.

\(^{180}\) The text of Article 19 reads as follows:

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has care of the child.
Article 19 takes the approach that the most effective method of protecting children is by supporting their families. In addition, it places a duty on states parties to establish, as appropriate, social programs for prevention, identification, reporting, referral and investigation of abuse allegations. Judicial involvement is to be resorted to “as appropriate.” The approach is, therefore, neither predominantly punitive nor does it designate responsibility to a singular state agency.

As with any flexible approach to complex societal problems, the Convention has obvious and significant limitations. For example, the Article does not grant children entitlement to legal representation. In addition, and perhaps more significantly, the Article does not specify when investigations are to be initiated, how the child is to be protected, or the form judicial involvement will take. Given that the Article is the major statement protecting against child sexual abuse, these inadequacies are rather disappointing.

Although the above limitations are significant, some are at least circuitously redressable. Less remediable is the

2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.


182 Convention on the Rights of the Child, supra note 2, at art. 19(2).

183 This had not gone unnoticed, for the United States had proposed that it be made available. TRAVAUX PRÉPARATOIRES, supra note 131, at 273.

184 This oversight has been criticized by the delegation of the United States. TRAVAUX PRÉPARATOIRES, supra note 131, at 273. The Branch for the Advancement of Women unsuccessfully tried to include the disposition of removal into protective custody. Id. at 277.

185 TRAVAUX PRÉPARATOIRES, supra note 131, at 274 (Ukraine criticized the United States for focusing on judicial procedures and punitive measures).

186 For example, nation states may now be held accountable for consistent patterns of abuse committed by private individuals; see, e.g., Judgment in Velasquez-Rodriguez, 1988 Inter-Am. Ct. Hum. Rts. (Ser. C) No.4, at 154-56, 28 I.L.M. 291, 326 (1989) (state accountability held to extend to responsibility for acts committed by private individuals, amounting to torture and the disappearance of individuals, as the pattern of abuses points to state complicity). Treaty law may be applied where the state refuses to take responsibility for a consistent and reliably attested pattern of institutional child sexual abuse. Cf. id. at 144-47 (state responsibility was engaged because there was a consistent pattern of abuse linking the actions
manner in which the Convention prioritizes the protection and support of families. Although in some instances supporting families may be an adequate and reasonable response, it is not clear to what extent a family-focused approach will alleviate, let alone prevent, sexual abuse. Since sexual abuse primarily occurs within families,\footnote{187} it is difficult to say what type of family support will prevent abuse from occurring in the first place. Furthermore, it is not obvious how well-equipped or how willing states are to intervene in the internal dynamics of families.\footnote{188}

Although its response to abuse is often inadequate, the international community has recognized that protection from sexual abuse is a basic human right. Viewing protections from sexual abuse as a children's right issue does have the potential to reform current child protection efforts.\footnote{189} Yet, despite this recognition and potential, it remains unclear what the re-

\footnote{187}See \textit{supra} note 157 and accompanying text.
\footnote{188}See \textit{Levesque}, \textit{supra} note 2, 284-87 (noting that a major difficulty with the Convention is that it strives to make families more public, and noting general inability and hesitancy on the part of legislatures, courts and society to pierce the family veil).
\footnote{189}See, \textit{e.g.}, Roger J.R. \textit{Levesque}, \textit{Prosecuting Sex Crimes Against Children: Time for \textquoteleft\textquoteleft Outrageous\textquoteright\textquoteright\ Proposals?}, 19 \textit{L. \\& PSYCH. REV.} (forthcoming 1995) (manuscript at 49-50, on file with author) (concluding that the current approach to protecting children from sexual maltreatment is somewhat misguided and that taking individual child-victims seriously would mean fundamentally re-envisioning the current legal system which focuses on prosecuting offenders rather than fostering prevention and attending to the support needs of children).
response ultimately will be. This question remains even if nation states give considerable social, moral and economic commitment to dealing with sexual abuse. Thus, even when children’s rights are taken seriously, there remain several obstacles blocking the full enjoyment of those rights.

CONCLUSION

The plight of sexually maltreated children is perhaps the most stark example of the need to reconsider the place of children in the New World Order. Despite escaping the scrutiny of commentators, it is clear that protection against sexual maltreatment is a right cognizable throughout international instruments. Unfortunately, like all instruments crafted by multilateral bodies, the instruments are necessarily imprecise. As a consequence, national legal systems striving to retain “flexibility” in their international obligations have two options. They may either avoid their international obligations by restrictive interpretation—or, alternatively, they may strengthen their approach by choosing a more progressive application. When the issue is child sexual maltreatment, the former approach seems de rigueur.

There is little reason to doubt the conventional wisdom that, by its prescriptive and injunctive character, international law does have the potential to proscribe practices which foster sexual maltreatment. Although international human rights law may provide a powerful normative statement, it remains difficult to enforce in practice. In addition, the issue of child sexual maltreatment is complex and, therefore, demands a complex response.

An examination of the sexual use of children reveals that conceptions of sexual behavior, harm, and rights vary across cultures. No matter how attractive it may be to allow human rights to be defined by local practices, it does not address practices which, from an outsiders’ point of view, would violate basic human rights. If consensus exists among nations, it is that the official doctrine underlying the international law of human rights is in principle universal and is based on human dignity. Considering this consensus, the failure of an international response to traditional, cultural practices which involve children sexually appears particularly egregious. Although
international law does not delineate what the moral response should be in terms of respecting cultures, it clearly suggests intervention and Westernization.

The sexual exploitation of children has created a situation to which international law seems aptly positioned to respond. Indeed, there are several international prohibitions against sexual exploitation. Yet, it can hardly be argued that the international community has responded appropriately. As we have seen, even when morally unambiguous situations present themselves—when all agree that the practice should be stopped—nation states remain reluctant to intervene. Not only do they hesitate to interfere with other states, they do not even appear willing to enact responsible laws within their own countries.

The sexual abuse of children exposes the persistent, yet often unacknowledged, uncertainty over what international law can do when there is no consensus about appropriate responses. Even when an intuitively appealing response is made—such as aiming to support families—it still may fail to appropriately address issues of child abuse.

It should no longer be controversial to propose that there exists a developed body of customary and formal international law constituting children’s human right to be protected from sexual maltreatment. Although international law provides the global community with the power to intrude and impose internationally recognized human rights standards, it would be unwise to conclude that international law offers a general license for intervention. International law offers the necessary first step. It suggests that domestic conduct in regard to children’s basic human rights may be exposed to all members of the international community so that children’s rights can be properly scrutinized, appraised, and eventually affirmed. Ultimately, the next step is for nations to take international law seriously and to move beyond engaging in merely cosmetic or symbolic gestures to address truly inhumane practices.