From Focus on the Family:

"When Netflix began to advertise for Cuties, the streaming network chose a hypersexualized image of young girls dressed in provocative clothing, as if they were headed to a strip club. And that was all it took to set the internet ablaze.

And rightfully so.

It is wrong to sexualize young girls. It is wrong to create films that portray young girls as sexual objects, thus fueling pedophilia, the porn industry and sex trafficking. And Cuties does indeed creepily objectify the young girls whose story it tells. Lingering camera shots of the girls’ sensual, stripper-inspired poses are deeply uncomfortable and unsettling. And one apparent teen’s briefly exposed breast in a video has raised legitimate questions about whether that moment might legally constitute child pornography.

If that were all that was happening in Cuties, this could mark the end of our review. But there’s more we need to talk about.

What’s less apparent in all the conversation about Cuties is that director Maïmouna Doucouré seems to be critiquing the very sexualization that has generated so much controversy. These girls barely know the basics about sex. But they’re imitating what the culture has shown them, and they’re enjoying the apparent (if counterfeit and self-destructive) “power” that objectifying themselves provides.

We see how this sexualization starts at a very young age, fueled by music videos and online social influencers (the same things many young girls are watching today, things that often get a pass by society as “creative freedom”).

We repeatedly watch as the girls view porn and pornographic music videos, a graphic “education” that their parents are clueless about. They giggle and laugh and blush and … really have no idea at all what they’re looking at. Because, well, they’re 11. But that doesn’t stop them from imitating it.

Amid these deep problems, then, Cuties painfully illustrates the vicious cycle of social media’s influence. As Amy posts provocative (and anatomical) pictures, she receives more and more likes. So, what does that teach her? It teaches her that sex sells. It teaches her that the more likes she receives, the more she is valued.

In the end, a tearful Amy runs away from her dance crew, exchanges her revealing clothes for more modest ones and goes out to jump rope with neighborhood friends. The ending implies that Amy’s carefree, childhood innocence has been terribly sullied by her journey into self-objectification, but that there may yet be hope for her to embrace innocence again.

For those reasons, I think the director meant to spark thoughtful discussion about how we should protect our children against these constant pressures. But while that’s a laudable goal, the film’s path to it is still deeply, problematic—which brings us right back to where we started.

Cuties may try, on some level, to critique the sexualization of young girls. But it does so by taking a group of young girls and objectifying them through their dance movements, revealing clothing and life choices. Some of these images are simply shocking—and they’re the ones that have provoked the firestorm around Cuties. The film gratuitously, excessively indulges in the very images and ideas it’s supposedly criticizing. To say that the result is a mixed message is an understatement indeed.

But does anyone of any age really need to see such a graphic portrayal of this problem to know how damaging it is to young girls growing up in this toxic cultural fog today? The answer is clear, especially when we acknowledge the sad fact that certain viewers with a pedophilic predilection for children won’t be watching this film because of its cultural commentary or cautionary message."