

## ***HYPER-SEXUALISATION: A VIOLENCE IMPOSED ON YOUNG GIRLS***

From a young and impressionable age, girls are bombarded by countless messages and images encouraging them to take on the role of a seductress. Skeptical? Take a moment and read on!

In recent times, have you found yourself purchasing a t-shirt with the word *PRINCESS* written on it, and this for a young girl, of let's say seven years of age? And then as she grows a little older, maybe at the age of ten, *CUTIE* or even the phrase *I LOVE BOYS* are the newest accessories found on her tops. Finally you become a witness to this same girl, quite possibly your own daughter, sporting the image of the playboy bunny at the tender age of twelve. And while this young girl believes herself to be empowered and defends her right of expression, in today's most unfortunate reality she has simply conformed to the social norms dictated by the new phenomena of hyper-sexualisation. There, with great impact you realize the reality of the hyper-sexualisation of today's youngest members of the female persuasion!

Hyper-sexualisation has pushed its way within the core of our lives, infiltrating our relationships with others and even ourselves. This phenomenon, composed of multiple sexist values, succeeds in degrading the female members of society. What better way to negatively transform the individual and collective identity of the female gender, than by constantly exposing us to images that achieve and sustain the sexual objectification of women?

Whether it be through: sexy clothing for younger females, articles in girl magazines placing great emphasis and importance on relationships with boys, idealising the image of a thin woman, relentless promotion of weight loss, encouraging an unattainable standard of beauty, the ever expanding industry of plastic surgery, objectifying women in mass media, sexualising the body of women and girls or the trivialisation of pornography, the conveyed message is that, even today, a woman's value in our society is heavily based upon her physical beauty and sexuality! And so, this reality of hyper-sexualisation that bombards our population permits and even encourages a young girl's obsession with her physical appearance and the power of seduction thereby compromising the development of her true identity. She finds herself in a constant search of approval; she no longer identifies herself in relation to her achievements, her strengths or her originality, but sadly, only by how she is viewed by her male peers.

The striking growth and pronounced accessibility of the sex industry has allowed its infiltration within various realms of society, including the world of media, advertising, fashion, pop culture, etc. The culture of pornography has been introduced and has unfortunately secured its home in today's popular culture. It has succeeded in placing male sexual fantasies, high risk sexual behaviours and erotic standards, in the top ten preoccupations of today's youth. These young members of society are exposed to countless sexual connotations at a vulnerable period in their lives where they are in search of role models and open to a sense of discovery. The image of sex they are exposed to, consume and then finally replicate, is an act void of any real connection and intimacy. And so, young girls are lead to perform oral sex, sodomy and partake in sexual games with members of the same sex, all with the objective of pleasing and conforming to what she believes the

opposite sex expects of her. Today's reality is truly alarming! The pronounced inequality between the sexes as well as the exploitation of women which characterises pornography is being falsely presented to our children as acceptable models.

Hyper-sexualisation is not a reality foreign to today's rulers of economy. In fact the exact opposite is true as great enterprises aim their efforts in capitalising and profiting from this phenomenon as their marketing strategies are geared towards young girls between the ages of nine and twelve. This industry is well aware of the influence these young girls possess in relation to the spending habits of their household. Their massive buying power, or more precisely that of their parents, can not be neglected by the profit driven sectors of our society. The potential of these young female consumers is grand and includes the purchasing of various cosmetic products, multiple articles of clothing, several accessories, music, videos, and of course, teen magazines whose primary focus is fashion and boys. These enterprises strategically target preadolescents who are at a pivotal point in developing their identity, are exceptionally vulnerable to the messages exposed to them by society and possess a strong desire to conform. By influencing a female's purchasing habits at an early age, great enterprises have secured a life long and faithful customer!

The phenomena of hyper-sexualisation has contributed to the creation of social norms which place great importance upon the physical appearance, capacity to seduce, sexual performance and mass consumption of today's female society. As such, those who refuse to conform to these norms will be punished by experiencing a pronounced sense of exclusion. Hyper-sexualisation permits and encourages sexism, misogyny exploitation and the creation of fundamental inequalities within the relationships between the sexes, where violence against women, in all its various forms, will unfortunately find a home and flourish.

**You can also contact the following organisation for referral services:  
SOS Violence Conjugale: 1-800-363-9010**

**And, if there is a threat of, or an actual occurrence of violence:  
Please contact 911.**

*«This article's serie has been created by the women's shelters of Laval. This original project has been financed by the Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Laval.»*