

Sensing the Impacts of Hypersexualization and Opportunities for Change in Nova Scotia

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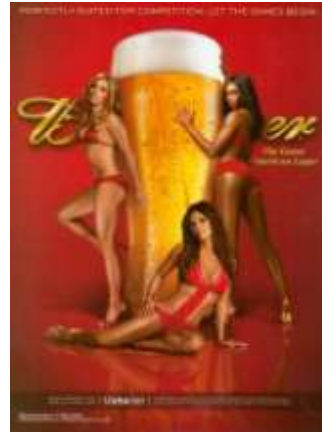
HSZ defined

Healthy sexual development

- Part of overall health and well-being
- A natural process of maturation
- Part of our identity
- Positive

Hypersexualization

- Objectification
- Exploitation
- Commodification
- Blurring the lines between adult/child sexuality
- Message that your value comes from your appearance
- Marketing, "sex sells"
- Mainstreaming of porn

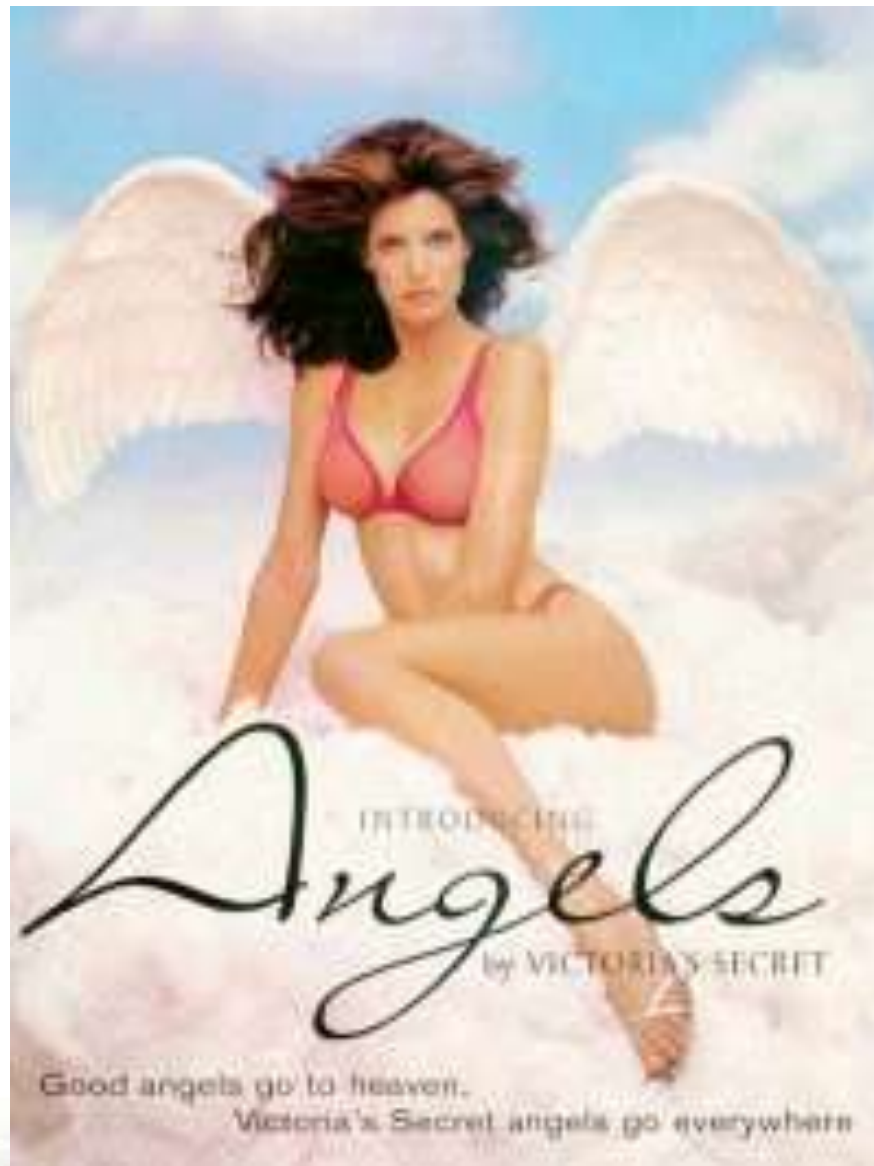


Sex sells, but what price are we paying?

- Poor mental and emotional health outcomes
- Poor sexual health outcomes
- Poor physical health outcomes
- Poor education and career outcomes
- ↑ incidence of violence and crime (intimate partner and sexual violence, child sexual abuse and exploitation, market for child porn)
- Perpetuation of oppression (homophobia, sexism, transphobia)

Injury related impacts

- Passivity in girls
- Low self-esteem, poor body image, depression
- Fragmented consciousness/ disrupted mental capacity
- Increased incidence of IPV and SV
- Less involvement in physical activity
- HSZ images and messages are everywhere



Hypersexualization Project Overview

- How is HSZ showing up in NS?
- What is happening in communities to counter the harmful effects?
- What actions do people want to take?

Hypersexualization Project Overview

- Interviews (35)
- Learning Journeys and film screenings (14)
- Approx 10 sessions with youth
- Diverse stakeholders

What we heard: Some themes

- Everyone could connect to this issue
- People talked about how HSZ is normal and pervasive
- Getting youth to talk about this is *“like a fish trying to describe water”*
- HSZ is like the air we breathe and the water we swim in
- We’ve crossed a line

Select themes

- Youth are under tremendous pressure
- Pornography is the new source of sex education
- The real or perceived threat of sexual violence is part of what it means to be a girl or woman
- Use of alcohol to self-medicate and lose inhibitions
- Traditional “scripts” of masculinity and femininity reinforced

- *"(girls have) this submissive kind of (attitude)...I think about that in the context of girls getting in the car with the guy and the guy is driving like a (#@*!), endangering this girl's life, but she's completely passive about it because he's driving and that's not her role...She's along for the ride..."*



What can we do?

Countering the harmful effects of HSZ and building resiliency in children and youth

Bright Lights and Countering Forces

- Safe spaces
- Youth engagement opportunities
- Positive role models and mentors for youth
- Play
- Efforts to raise awareness of HSZ and industry practices

Countering HSZ - APA

- Access to comprehensive sexuality education in schools
- Media literacy for youth and adults
- Increase access to sport and extracurricular programs for girls that focus on girls' achievement rather than their appearance.
- Initiatives to help parents to address impact of hypersexualization
- Advertising restrictions (legislation)
- Advocating for responsible corporate citizenship

APA

HSZ project where we are now

- Continue to raise awareness of issue among various sectors
- Look at leverage areas and opportunities for innovation

Resources

- American Psychological Association (2007). Report of the APA Taskforce on the Sexualization of Girls.
<http://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report.aspx>
- Papadopoulos, L. (2010). Sexualisation of Young People Review.
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100418065544/homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/sexualisation-young-people.html>

Questions?

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