Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls

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Preface

At the recommendation of the American Psychological Association (APA) Committee on Women in Psychology (CWP) and with the approval of the Board for the Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest (BAPPI) and the Board of Directors, APA's Council of Representatives established the Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls in February 2005. The Council charged the task force as follows:

> *The Task Force will examine and summarize the best psychological theory, research, and clinical experience addressing the sexualization of girls via media and other cultural messages, including the prevalence of these messages and their impact on girls, and include attention to the role and impact of race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. The Task Force will produce a report, including recommendations for research, practice, education and training, policy, and public awareness.*

APA has long been involved in issues related to the impact of media content on children. In 1994, APA adopted a policy resolution on Violence in Mass Media, which updated and expanded an earlier resolution on televised violence. In 2004, the APA Task Force on Advertising and Children produced a report examining broad issues related to advertising to children. That report provided recommendations to restrict advertising that is primarily directed at young children and to include developmentally appropriate disclaimers in advertising. The report also included recommendations regarding research, applied psychology, industry practices, media literacy, advertising, and schools. The sexualization of girls in advertising was outside the scope of that report, however, and the issue was therefore not addressed. In 2005, APA adopted the policy resolution on Violence in Video Games and Interactive Media, which documented the negative impact of exposure to violent interactive media on children and youth and called for the reduction of violence in these media. These resolutions and reports addressed how violent media and advertising affect children and youth, but they did not address the issue of sexualization.

BAPPI appointed six psychologists plus a public member to the Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls: Eileen L. Zurbriggen, PhD (Chair); Rebecca L. Collins, PhD; Sharon Lamb, EdD; Tomi-Ann Roberts, PhD; Deborah L. Tolman, EdD; L. Monique Ward, PhD; and Jeanne Blake (Public Member, Blake Works, Inc.). Jessica Henderson Daniel, PhD, served as liaison from the Board of Directors. Janet Shibley Hyde, PhD, and Louise B. Silverstein, PhD, served as liaisons from CWP.

Report of the Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls

Introduction

There are many examples of the sexualization of girls and girlhood in U.S. culture. Toy manufacturers produce dolls wearing black leather miniskirts, feather boas, and thigh-high boots and market them to 8- to 12-year-old girls (LaFerla, 2003). Clothing stores sell thongs sized for 7– to 10-year-old girls (R. Brooks, 2006; Cook & Kaiser, 2004), some printed with slogans such as "eye candy" or "wink wink" (Cook & Kaiser, 2004; Haynes, 2005; Levy, 2005a; Merskin, 2004); other thongs sized for women and late adolescent girls are imprinted with characters from Dr. Seuss and the Muppets (e.g., see www.princesscassie.com/children/cat.shtml) (Levy, 2005a; Pollett & Hurwitz, 2004). In the world of child beauty pageants, 5-year-old girls wear fake teeth, hair extensions, and makeup and are encouraged to "flirt" onstage by batting their long, false eyelashes (Cookson, 2001). On prime-time television, girls can watch fashion shows in which models made to resemble little girls wear sexy lingerie (e.g., the CBS broadcast of *Victoria's Secret Fashion Show* on December 6, 2005). Journalists, child advocacy organizations, parents, and psychologists have become alarmed, arguing that the sexualization of girls is a broad and increasing problem and is harmful to girls (Bloom, 2004; "Buying Into Sexy," 2005; Dalton, 2005; Lamb & Brown, 2006; Levin, 2005; Levy, 2005a; Linn, 2004; Pollet & Hurwitz, 2004; Schor, 2004).

The Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls was formed in response to these expressions of public concern. In this report, we examine and summarize psychological theory, research, and clinical experience addressing the sexualization of girls. We (a) define sexualization; (b) examine the prevalence and provide examples of sexualization in society and in cultural institutions, as well as interpersonally and intrapsychically; (c) evaluate the evidence suggesting that sexualization has negative consequences for girls and for the rest of society; and (d) describe positive alternatives that may help counteract the influence of sexualization.

Definition

There are several components to sexualization, and these set it apart from healthy sexuality. Healthy sexuality is an important component of both physical and mental health, fosters intimacy, bonding, and shared pleasure, and involves mutual respect between consenting partners (Satcher, 2001; Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States [SIECUS], 2004). In contrast, sexualization occurs when

- a person's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics;
- a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy;
- a person is sexually objectified—that is, made into a thing for others' sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making; and/or
- sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person.

All four conditions need not be present; any one is an indication of sexualization. Much of the evidence that we evaluate in this report is specific to the third condition—sexual objectification. The fourth condition (the inappropriate imposition of sexuality) is especially relevant to children. Anyone (girls, boys, men, women) can be sexualized. But when children are imbued with adult sexuality, it is often imposed upon them rather than chosen by them. Self-motivated sexual exploration, on the other hand, is not sexualization by our definition, nor is age-appropriate exposure to information about sexuality.

We view the sexualization of girls as occurring along a continuum, with sexualized evaluation (e.g., looking at someone in a sexual way) at the less extreme end, and sexual exploitation, such as trafficking or abuse, at the more extreme end. We offer several examples of the sexualization of girls to clarify our definition:

- Imagine a 5-year-old girl walking through a mall wearing a short T-shirt that says "Flirt."
- Consider the instructions given in magazines to preadolescent girls on how to look sexy and get a boyfriend by losing 10 pounds and straightening their hair.

- Envision a soccer team of adolescent girls whose sex appeal is emphasized by their coach or a local journalist to attract fans.
- Think of print advertisements that portray women as little girls, with pigtails and ruffles, in adult sexual poses.

These examples illustrate different aspects of our definition of sexualization. In the first example, we are concerned with the imbuing of adult sexuality upon a child. In the second, we are reminded that a specific and virtually unattainable physical appearance constitutes sexiness for women and girls in our society. In the third, we see that sexuality is valued over other more relevant characteristics, such as the girls' athletic abilities. In addition, the girls are being sexually objectified. In the fourth example, the adult models are sexually objectified and the distinction between adults and children is blurred, thus sexualizing girlhood.

Sexualization may be especially problematic when it happens to youth. Developing a sense of oneself as a sexual being is an important task of adolescence (Adelson, 1980; Arnett, 2000; W. A. Collins & Sroufe, 1999), but sexualization may make this task more difficult. Indeed, Tolman (2002) argued that in the current environment, teen girls are encouraged to look sexy, yet they know little about what it means to be sexual, to have sexual desires, and to make rational and responsible decisions about pleasure and risk within intimate relationships that acknowledge their own desires. Younger girls imbued with adult sexuality may seem sexually appealing, and this may suggest their sexual availability and status as appropriate sexual objects. Concomitantly, women are often considered sexy only when they appear young, thus blurring the line between who is and is not sexually mature (Cook & Kaiser, 2004).

Scope of This Report

We propose that the sexualization of girls occurs within three interrelated spheres.:

- *The contribution by society*—that is, the cultural[1] norms, expectations, and values that are communicated in myriad ways, including through the media. A culture can be infused with sexualized representations of girls and women, suggesting that such sexualization is good and normal.
- *An interpersonal contribution*—Girls can be treated as, and encouraged to be, sexual objects by family, peers, and others.
- *Self-sexualization*—Girls may treat and experience themselves as sexual objects (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). If girls learn that sexualized behavior and appearance are approved of and rewarded by society and by the people (e.g., peers) whose opinions matter most to them, they are likely to internalize these standards, thus engaging in self-sexualization.

We review evidence concerning the prevalence of the sexualization of girls and women in each of these three spheres. We also review evidence that links sexualization to a variety of harmful consequences. These consequences include harm to the sexualized individuals themselves, to their interpersonal relationships, and to society. For example, there is evidence that sexualization contributes to impaired cognitive performance in college-aged women, and related research suggests that viewing material that is sexually objectifying can contribute to body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, low self-esteem, depressive affect, and even physical health problems in high-school-aged girls and in young women. The sexualization of girls may not only reflect sexist attitudes, a societal tolerance of sexual violence, and the exploitation of girls and women but may also contribute to these phenomena.

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[1]Although there are many sociocultural groups in the United States, most people, in particular young people, receive a great deal of exposure to what is often referred to as the "dominant" U.S. culture (White, middle-to-upper-class, young-to-middle-aged, heterosexual). One especially salient dimension of this dominant culture is "pop" (or popular) culture. For the purposes of this report, *culture* and *cultural* generally refer to this dominant culture.

Much of the research reviewed in this report concerns the sexualization of women (college age and older) rather than girls.[2] One reason for this is the paucity of research specifically on the sexualization of girls—research that is urgently needed. However, research on both the prevalence and the effects of the sexualization of women is highly relevant to understanding the sexualization of girls for several reasons.

First, there is a developmental argument that focuses on the importance of modeling as a developmental process (Bandura, 1986, 1994). Girls develop their identities as teenagers and as women, and they learn the socially acceptable ways to engage in intimate relationships by modeling what they see older girls and young women doing (Bussey & Bandura, 1984, 1992; Lips, 1989) and by imitating the ways in which women are represented in the media (Huston & Wright, 1998). Concomitantly, parents and other adults may overtly or inadvertently communicate expectations that girls should embody the appearances, attitudes, and behaviors that are exemplified by sexualized adult women (of course, parents might instead encourage girls to reject these sexualized models). As this report documents, there is no question that girls (and boys) grow up in a cultural milieu saturated with sexualizing messages. Thus, research on the sexualization of women is highly relevant to the sexualization of girls.

Second, there is a methodological argument. Although many of the existing studies on media effects have tested college students and have examined their media exposure levels and corresponding sexual attitudes and behavior, this research is not just about the here and now. Most of these studies have been conducted under the premise of cultivation theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994), which argues that exposure to consistent themes *over time* leads viewers to adopt a particular perspective of the world, one that coincides with the images they have been viewing. Although researchers typically test this premise by demonstrating that current exposure levels are associated with current attitudes, this is usually done merely for the sake of convenience. The underlying assumption is that a lifetime of exposure to comparable images and messages has led to such attitudes. We must deduce, therefore, that what young women believe about themselves and how they feel in the present moment were shaped by how they were treated and what they were exposed to when they were girls. Knowing how young women feel about and respond to sexualization, then, is entirely relevant to understanding how girls feel about and respond to sexualization.

Much of this report focuses on the media, in large part because this cultural contribution to the sexualization of girls and women has been studied most extensively. In addition, children and adolescents spend more time with entertainment media than they do with any other activity except school and sleeping (D. Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout, 2005). We recognize that there are other important socialization influences, including churches, schools, peers, siblings, parents, and other adults in girls' lives, and where studies concerning these socialization sources exist, we review them. We also acknowledge that the media are not just a means of creating or strengthening cultural values. Fueled by consumer culture, they are also a delivery system for already-existing cultural values. Finally, we do not assume that girls are "empty vessels" into which information from the media is poured but that they are actively engaged in choosing and interpreting the media in their lives, with increasing independence as they mature from girlhood to late adolescence (Rubin, 2002; Steele, 1999).

We emphasize the importance of appreciating developmental processes and the enormous differences in girls as they develop. Thus, the effects of sexualization are likely to vary depending on a girl's age, so that what is inappropriate for a 6-year-old might be perfectly appropriate for a high school girl. The perspectives and experiences that a young girl brings to her exposure to sexualizing images and experiences, as well as her cognitive, intellectual, social, and even physical development, might profoundly influence the effect that such exposure would have on her, rendering it quite different from what a teenage girl would experience.

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[2]Age ranges for childhood, preadolescence, and adolescence vary across the research summarized in this report. Where relevant, age ranges reported reflect definitions from individual studies. *Tween,* though not a scientific term, is used by advertisers and marketers, and the report discusses the tween population in that context.

Ethnic and sociocultural differences are also relevant. Immigrant girls and girls and women of color have historically suffered stereotypes that focus on their sexuality and their bodies (Hill Collins, 2004). In addition, women's sexuality (e.g., attitudes, beliefs, behaviors) can vary widely for women of different ethnicities (Greene, 2000; Hurtado, 2003). Negative stereotypes concerning the sexuality of poor women are prevalent (Limbert & Bullock, 2005). Sexual socialization is profoundly heterosexual and heteronormative (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe, & Thomson, 2004; Phillips, 2000; Tolman, 2006). Throughout this report, therefore, where data are available, we address how the prevalence and effects of sexualization may vary among girls from different ethnic, socioeconomic, religious, and family backgrounds, as well as among girls of different sexual orientations.

It is important to note what the report does not cover. It does not review evidence concerning the prevalence and effects of sexually suggestive or sexually explicit material per se. Rather, we are concerned with such material only insofar as it fits within the four-part definition of sexualization given previously. The report also covers extreme forms of sexualization (e.g., prostitution, pornography, trafficking, child sexual abuse) only briefly. Finally, we acknowledge that this phenomenon and the concern about it is not, and cannot be, limited by U.S. borders, in part because U.S. culture is exported worldwide. For the purposes of this report, however, our focus is on the United States. Expanding to an international scope is a useful goal for the future.

The rest of the report is divided into four sections. In Section 2, we provide evidence of the existence of the sexualization of girls and women in three spheres: in U.S. society or culture, in girls' interpersonal relationships, and within individual girls themselves. In the third section, we describe the potential mechanisms by which the sexualization of girls occurs and the known and likely effects of the sexualization of girls: on girls themselves, on others with whom girls have interpersonal relationships (boys, men, adult women), and on U.S. societal institutions. In the fourth section, we outline positive alternatives to the sexualization of girls and describe promising methods of ameliorating the effects of sexualization when it

does occur. Finally, in the fifth section, we make recommendations for action, beginning with a call for research to develop a body of knowledge specifically on the sexualization of girls as well as to expand our knowledge of the prevalence and effects of sexualization more generally.

Evidence for the Sexualization of Girls

Cultural Contributions

Media

With the plethora of media options available today, it is possible to access the latest news or the most popular song almost anywhere and anytime, yet it is also possible to be inundated by unwanted messages and material. Media content responds to demand and is a reflection of culture, but it also contributes to it. Throughout U.S. culture, and particularly in mainstream media, women and girls are depicted in a sexualizing manner. These representations can be seen in virtually every medium, including prime-time television programs (e.g., Grauerholz & King, 1997; L. M. Ward, 1995), television commercials (e.g., Lin, 1997), music videos (e.g., Gow, 1996; R. C. Vincent, 1989), and magazines (e.g., Krassas, Blauwkamp, & Wesselink, 2001, 2003; Plous & Neptune, 1997).

Girls are major consumers of media and receive and engage with these messages every day. According to Nielsen Media Research (1998), the average child or teen watches 3 hours of television per day, and the numbers are higher for Black and Latino youth. When various media are combined, children view 6 hours 32 minutes per day. The Kaiser Family Foundation (2003) reported that 68% of children have a TV in their bedroom, that 51% of girls play interactive games on their computers and video game consoles, and that girls, like boys, are on their computers about an hour each day visiting Web sites, listening to music, frequenting chat rooms, playing games, and sending messages to friends (D. Roberts et al., 2005). Massive exposure to media among youth creates the potential for massive exposure to portrayals that sexualize women and girls and teach girls that women are sexual objects.

Television

On television, young viewers encounter a world that is disproportionately male, especially in youth-oriented programs, and one in which female characters are significantly more likely than male characters to be attractive and provocatively dressed (Eaton, 1997). Sexual comments and remarks are pervasive on television (L. M. Ward, 2003), and research has shown that they disproportionately sexually objectify women. For example, in her analysis of prime-time programs popular among children and adolescents, L. M. Ward (1995) found that 11.5% of the verbal sexual messages coded involved sexually objectifying comments, nearly all of which were about women. Similarly, Lampman et al. (2002), studying sexual remarks made on prime-time comedies, found that 23% of the sexual behaviors coded were leering, ogling, staring, and catcalling at female characters. Additionally, 16.5% of the sexual remarks detected were about body parts or nudity. A majority of these comments (85%) came from men.

In their analysis of sexual harassment on prime-time programming, Grauerholz and King (1997) reported a similar focus on the denigration of women that alluded to their sexuality and lack of intellect and that objectified their bodies. Of the 81 episodes analyzed, 84% contained at least one incident of sexual harassment, with an average of 3.4 incidents per program. The most frequent acts were sexist comments (33.3% of the incidents) in which a wide variety of deprecating words were used to describe women (e.g., *broad, bimbo, dumb ass chick, toots, fox, babe, blondie*). The next most frequent occurrences were verbal sexual comments (32% of the incidents). These comments typically focused on women's bodies or body parts, especially breasts, which were referred to as *jugs, boobs, knockers, hooters, cookware,* and *canned goods.* The third most common category was body language (13%) and generally involved men or adolescent boys leering at women or girls. In total, the authors reported that approximately 78% of the harassment focused on demeaning terms for women or on the sexualization of their bodies.

In a more recent analysis of sexual harassment in workplace-based situation comedies, Montemurro (2003) made further distinctions, separating gender harassment (jokes, looks, calls) from quid pro quo sexual harassment (touches, favors, dates). Analyzing 56 episodes drawn from five different programs, she found an average of 3.3 incidents of gender harassment per episode and 0.50 incidents of sexual harassment. Dominant were jokes referring to women's sexuality or women's bodies and comments that characterized women as sexual objects; 74% of the episodes analyzed contained at least one incident of gender harassment in the form of jokes, most of which were accompanied by laugh tracks.

Music Videos

Content analyses indicate that 44%–81% of music videos contain sexual imagery (Gow, 1990; Greeson & Williams, 1986; Pardun & McKee, 1995; Sherman & Dominick, 1986). Sexually objectifying images of women constitute a large portion of this sexual content. In music videos, women more frequently than men are presented in provocative and revealing clothing (e.g., Andsager & Roe, 1999; Seidman, 1992), are objectified (Sommers-Flanagan, Sommers-Flanagan, & Davis, 1993), and typically serve as decorative objects that dance and pose and do not play any instruments (e.g., Arnett, 2002; Gow, 1996). They are often displayed in ways that emphasize their bodies, body parts, facial features, and sexual readiness. R. C. Vincent, Davis, and Boruskowski (1987) found that 57% of the videos featured a woman portrayed exclusively as a decorative sexual object. In the 182 videos analyzed by Seidman (1992), 37% of women wore revealing clothing, compared with 4.2% of men. L. M. Ward and Rivadeneyra's (2002) more recent analysis of the most popular music videos on Black Entertainment Television found sexual imagery in 84% of the videos; the two most frequently occurring sexual behaviors were sexual objectification and women dancing sexually. Seventy-one percent of

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women in these videos were dressed in mildly provocative or provocative clothing or wore no clothing at all, compared with 35% of male characters.

In contrast to public perception, these patterns are not restricted to pop or hip-hop videos. In one analysis of country music videos, 42% of female artists were coded as wearing alluring clothing (Andsager & Roe, 1999). In their analysis of 40 MTV music videos, Sommers-Flanagan et al. (1993) found objectification in 44.4% of the 30-second segments coded. They commented, "given . . . the frequency of objectification within these videos, the concept of a whole person involved in a complex relationship with another whole person is clearly absent from the video's message" (p. 752).

Music videos convey information about female sexuality not only through the images and story lines of individual videos but also through the changing personas of the artists themselves. In their analysis of the last 20 years of music videos, communication scholars Andsager and Roe (2003) noted that one of the distinct ways in which sex is used is as a metamorphosis. They show how teen artists exploit their sexuality to establish a more mature and "edgier" version of their former selves as they cross the threshold from teenage icon to adult musician. According to the authors, this process is exemplified by Christina Aguilera, Faith Hill, and Britney Spears, who displayed her "mature" image at the 2001 MTV Awards in a nude body stocking. The authors commented that such tactics often provoke sexualized discussion of the artist—that is, discussion focuses not on her talent or music but rather on her body and sexuality. These transformations likely drive home the point that being a successful sexual object is the way to be perceived as mature and successful in the music industry.

Music Lyrics

Although studies have documented the sexualization of women in music videos, sexualizing content in the lyrics that accompany these videos has not been documented as extensively. References to relationships, romance, and sexual behavior are commonplace in popular music lyrics and videos (Christenson & Roberts, 1998). One comprehensive analysis of sexual content in adolescents'

"media diets" demonstrated that sexual content appeared more frequently in adolescents' musical choices than in their television, movie, or magazine choices (Pardun, L'Engle, & Brown, 2005); however, there are no recent content analyses to determine how often sexual content consumed by teens objectifies girls or women. It is evident that the lyrics of some recent popular songs sexualize women or refer to them in highly degrading ways, or both. Some examples include the following:

- *"So blow me bitch I don't rock for cancer/I rock for the cash and the topless dancers"* (Kid Rock, "f*ck off," 1998)

- *"Don'tcha wish your girlfriend was hot like me?"* (Pussycat Dolls, 2005)

- *"That's the way you like to f*** . . . rough sex make it hurt, in the garden all in the dirt"* (Ludacris, 2000)

- *"I tell the hos all the time, Bitch get in my car"* (50 Cent, 2005)

- *"Ho shake your ass"* (Ying Yang Twins, 2003)

As part of a recent study of the effects of listening to popular music on sexual behavior (Martino et al., 2006), researchers coded the content of 164 songs from 16 artists popular with teens. Overall, 15% of songs contained sexually degrading lyrics. Most of these lyrics were concentrated within the work of rap and R&B artists; as many as 70% of individual artists' songs included degrading sexual content.

Movies

Adolescents constitute the largest demographic segment of moviegoers (Strasburger, 1995), and a good number of movies with sexual themes have plots that appeal primarily to teen and young adult audiences (e.g., *Cruel Intentions, American Pie*). Children are also consumers of movies, with 13% attending movie theaters on a typical day and 39% watching a video or DVD (D. Roberts et al., 2005). Yet few empirical data have been gathered on the sexual content of feature films or the prevalence of sexualizing portrayals of girls and women. One pattern that has been studied, however, is the asymmetrical presence of nudity. In R-rated

movies of the 1980s, instances of female nudity were reported to exceed those of male nudity in a 4 to 1 ratio (B. S. Greenberg et al., 1993).

Another notable trend is the near absence of female characters in the top-grossing motion pictures (Bazzini, McIntosh, Smith, Cook, & Harris, 1997) and in G-rated movies (Kelly & Smith, 2006). Kelly and Smith evaluated the 101 top-grossing G-rated films from 1990 to 2004. Of the over 4,000 characters in these films, 75% overall were male, 83% of characters in crowds were male, 83% of narrators were male, and 72% of speaking characters were male. In addition, there was little change from 1990 to 2004. This gross underrepresentation of women or girls in films with family-friendly content reflects a missed opportunity to present a broad spectrum of girls and women in roles that are nonsexualized.

Cartoons and Animation

Much of children's programming features cartoons. Although the prevalence of sexualization in children's cartoons or teen animation (e.g., anime) has not yet been systematically studied, there is anecdotal evidence that cartoons may contain sexualizing images of girls and women. Several authors (Lamb & Brown, 2006; Levin, 2005) have expressed concern about the presence of sexualized content in some recent movies and television programs for children (e.g., sexy costumes that don't match the characters' roles in *Ella Enchanted,* the parody of a stripper in *Shrek 2*). Others have noted that Disney's female characters today (e.g., The Little Mermaid, Pocahontas) have more cleavage, fewer clothes, and are depicted as "sexier" than those of yesteryear (e.g., Snow White, Cinderella) (Lacroix, 2004). And the currently popular and sexily clad Bratz dolls (discussed in the Products section of this report, pp. 13–15) are the subject of an animated cartoon. This product tie-in could reinforce the appeal of the cartoon Bratz dolls and their potential power to influence girls. Studies do show that, with a few

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notable exceptions (e.g., Dora the Explorer), cartoons primarily portray girls as domestic, interested in boys, and concerned with their appearance (Thompson & Zerbinos, 1997), suggesting an overemphasis on the self as a romantic object, if not necessarily a sexual one.

Magazines

The number of teen-focused magazines has increased dramatically from 5 in 1990 to 19 in 2000, and most teens regularly read magazines ("Teen Market Profile," 2005). For example, one study (D. Roberts et al., 2005) found that 47% of 8- to 18-year-olds reported having read at least 5 minutes of a magazine the previous day, and 22% reported having read a magazine for 20 minutes or more the previous day; on average, 8- to 18-year-olds reported reading magazines 14 minutes a day.

Much of the research analyzing the sexual content of magazines focuses heavily on teen girls' and women's magazines (e.g., Carpenter, 1998; Durham, 1998; Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998; McMahon, 1990). One of the dominant themes about sexuality reported across these studies and across magazines is that presenting oneself as sexually desirable and thereby gaining the attention of men is and should be the focal goal for women. Girls and young women are repeatedly encouraged to look and dress in specific ways to look sexy for men, a phenomenon labeled "costuming for seduction" (M. Duffy & Gotcher, 1996), and to use certain products in order to be more attractive to and desired by males.

These studies document that attracting the attention of boys by looking "hot" and "sexy" is the point of many of the articles, text, cover lines, ads, and photographs. Repeated attempts are made, in the form of advice about hairstyles, cosmetics, clothing, diet, and exercise, to remake the reader as an object of male desire (McMahon, 1990). Nearly everything girls and women are encouraged to do in the line of self-improvement is geared toward gaining the attention of men. Even articles on physical fitness

analyzed in *Seventeen* and the now defunct *YM* (Durham, 1998) centered on the need for girls to increase their sexual desirability through exercise rather than on improving their health or well-being.

Similar results were reported by Garner et al. (1998), who analyzed advice given about sex in five magazines aimed at girls, adolescents, and young women: *YM, Teen, Seventeen, Glamour,* and *Mademoiselle.* The authors reported that the content of these magazines encouraged young women to think of themselves as sexual objects whose lives were not complete unless sexually connected with a man. Female readers were given advice on how to look and dress to attract men and on which attributes were most successful in attracting men (i.e., innocence) and which were least successful and should be avoided (e.g., being pushy or bossy, acting like a mom, being too demanding, pushing too early for commitment).

Thus, much of the content of mainstream magazines geared toward adolescent girls and young women heavily emphasizes the centrality of heterosexual relationships for women and the need to achieve rigid norms of physical attractiveness through the consumption of products such as cosmetics and fashionable clothing (Durham, 1998). As M. Duffy and Gotcher (1996) concluded from their analysis of *YM,*

> the world of *YM* is a place where young women . . . must consume and beautify themselves to achieve an almost impossible physical beauty ideal. And, it is a place where sexuality is both a means and an objective, where the pursuit of males is almost the sole focus of life. In fact, the objective of attracting males is the *only objective presented—it is an unquestioned "good."* (p. 43)

Sports Media

A large body of research shows that media coverage of women's sports is minimal compared with the extensive coverage of men's sports, despite the boom in female athletic participation since the passage of Title IX and the development of professional women's teams (e.g., Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles, 2001; M. C. Duncan, Messner, & Williams, 1991; Kane, 1996; Messner, Duncan, & Jensen, 1993; Pedersen & Whisenant, 2003; J. Vincent,

Imwold, Johnson, & Massey, 2003). This paucity of research means that what is covered must suffice to represent women's sports more broadly. Thus, it is particularly problematic that when women's sports are featured, coverage is often selective (Kane, 1996), and commentary often sexually objectifies female athletes as well as female fans in the audience (Messner, Duncan, & Cooky, 2003; Schultz, 2005).

Although scholars have documented differential and sexist treatment of female athletes for over a decade (e.g., Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Messner et al., 1993, 2003), available evidence suggests a trend for increasing sexualization of female athletes comparable to their overall increasing visibility. Male athletes are rarely depicted solely as sexual objects in their endorsement work, but several female athletes have recently posed nude or in provocative poses in national magazines. For example, eight Olympic athletes were featured in the September 2004 issue of *Playboy*, swimmer Amanda Beard appeared in *Sports Illustrated*'s 2005 swimsuit edition, and soccer player Brandi Chastain was in *Gear Magazine* in 1999.

Several targeted studies of specific media genres, sports, or sporting events have documented the frequency with which female athletes are sexualized. Fink and Kensicki (2002) explored the coverage of female athletes in *Sports Illustrated (SI)* and *Sports Illustrated for Women (SIW)* from 1997 to 1999. They found that only 10% of the photographs in *SI* during this 3-year period were of female athletes. Five percent of these photographs were "pornographic/sexually suggestive," defined as women dressed provocatively or photographed in such a way as to focus solely on sexual attributes (e.g., photograph framed on an athlete's breasts). Only .2% of the photographs of men fell into this category. Sixty-six percent of the photographs of men showed them actively engaged in a sport versus 34% of the photographs of women. Representations of women in *SIW* were only slightly better; 56% of photographs of women in *SIW* depicted them actively engaged in sports, and 2% were pornographic.

Shugart's (2003) study on print and television coverage of the 1999 U.S. women's soccer team lends further support for a pattern of sexualizing female athletes. Shugart argued that media coverage of the team was sexualized in three ways:

- *Subtle sexualization* occurred through passive objectification—for example, photographs that favored an athlete's face rather than her athletic performance.

- *Less subtle sexualization* was shown in commentators' remarks—for example, when Brandi Chastain removed her jersey after scoring the winning goal of the World Cup. Although this specific behavior was identical to that of male soccer players in the same circumstances, in Chastain's case, sportscasters called it a "striptease" and deemed her "the owner of the most talked-about breasts in the country" (pp. 12-13). In several media sources, the team was referred to as "booters with hooters" (p. 13).

- *"Vigilant heterosexuality"* was evident in commentary that placed the femininity of female athletes and their family lives in the foreground to suggest that they were not lesbians (regardless of their real-life sexual orientation). This form of sexualization marginalizes the athleticism of female athletes: "Female strength has been redefined as male pleasure" (p. 27). This assessment is echoed by Hill Collins (2004), who argued in an analysis of depictions of several African American athletes that their appearances in passive "sexy" poses in various media counteracted their aggression and passion on the court or field.

Video/Computer Games

The vast majority of children play video games: 87% of younger children and 70% of adolescents (Paik, 2001). A gender divide in heavy video game play exists, with 41% of boys playing games for more than an hour a day and only 18% of girls doing so (D. Roberts et al., 2005). Girls, however, spend an average of 40 minutes per day playing games online or on home systems (D. Roberts et al., 2005).

Games made for specialized systems and those made for personal computers contain highly sexualized content and few strong female protagonists (Dietz, 1998). In a recent study, Haninger and Thompson (2004) sampled 80 "Teen"-rated[3] video games from a population of 396 games in release in 2001. They observed sexual themes in 27% of games. Games were significantly more likely to depict female characters partially nude or engaged in sexual behaviors than to depict male characters in this way. When the authors expanded their definition of "sexual theme" to include "pronounced cleavage, large breasts, or provocative clothing," the percentage of female characters so depicted rose to 46%.

Beasley and Standley (2002) examined 64 games for sexualizing themes. Women were seldom depicted in any of these games (14% of all characters were female). When the clothing of female characters was compared with that of males, female characters' clothing was more likely to expose skin. Dill, Gentile, Richter, and Dill (2005) found that in the 20 top-selling games in 1999, only female characters were portrayed as highly sexualized.

Internet

Girls use the Internet frequently and for many purposes (D. Roberts et al., 2005). In recent years, studies have shown that girls and boys use the Internet in equal numbers (Lenhart, Rainie, & Lewis, 2001; D. Roberts et al., 2005), with girls leading boys in Internet use in the early middle-school years (Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005). The wide popularity of sites like MySpace.com as well as blog centers has encouraged youth, including girls, to describe themselves on the Internet. Recently, public attention has focused on the sexualized self-presentations by some girls on these Web sites and the dangers inherent in this practice (Kornblum, 2005), although there is currently no research that has assessed how girls portray themselves or how dangerous this practice is. Some girls have posed in provocative clothing and posted notices of their sexual availability.

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[3] According to the Entertainment Software Rating Board (n.d.), "T" or teen-rated video games have content that may be suitable for ages 13 and older. Titles in this category may contain violence, suggestive themes, crude humor, minimal blood, simulated gambling, and/or infrequent use of strong language.

The recent and global proliferation of Web sites of all kinds that may be of interest to girls makes it difficult to assess the sexualization of girls and women. Lambiase (2003) examined the sexualization of girls and women on one specific type of Web site that targets and attracts girls and teens: official and fan Web sites of male and female celebrities. She found that female celebrities were far more likely than male celebrities to be represented by sexualized images, regardless of whether the site was official or produced by fans. She also found that female musicians were more likely to be sexualized than other female celebrities. Pornography is readily available on the Internet (Griffiths, 2000), with one source estimating that 12% of all Web sites are pornography sites, and 25% of all search engine requests are for pornography (English, 2005). Extensive data on children's and adolescents' exposure to sexually objectifying material online is lacking; however, a Kaiser Family Foundation (2001) study found that 70% of teens 15–17 years of age had accidentally encountered pornography on the Internet, with 23% saying this happened somewhat or very often.

Advertising

The sexualization of women is particularly prominent in the world of advertising. In prime-time television commercials, for example, Lin (1997) demonstrated that women more often than men were shown in a state of undress, exhibited more "sexiness," and were depicted as sexual objects (9.2% of men vs. 20.8% of women). Similar findings have appeared in analyses of commercials on MTV (Signorielli, McLeod, & Healy, 1994), on Spanish-language programming (Fullerton & Kendrick, 2000), and in countries around the world, such as Turkey and Japan (Akima, 2003; Uray & Burnaz, 2003). Beer commercials have emerged as a particularly rich source of images that sexualize young women. Of the 72 beer and nonbeer ads randomly selected from prime-time sports and entertainment programming, 75% of the beer ads and 50% of the nonbeer ads were labeled as "sexist," featuring women in very limited and objectifying roles (Rouner, Slater, & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2003).

Magazine advertisements also sexualize women. First, studies indicate that women are frequently featured as sexual objects in such ads (e.g., Baker, 2005; Lindner, 2004; W. J. Rudman & Verdi, 1993). In one analysis of women appearing in advertisements in *Time* and *Vogue* from 1955 to 2002, Lindner (2004) reported that an average of 40% of ads featured women as decorative objects. When women are featured as "decorations" in ads (e.g., shown standing seductively next to a car to enhance the image of the car), their major purpose is to be looked at. They are treated as appendages to the product rather than as active consumers or users of the product.

Differences in these patterns emerge based on the magazine's intended audience and are particularly high in magazines targeting men. For example, Baker (2005) reported that in magazines targeting Black men or White men, 68.2% of women appearing in magazines for Black men and 53.3% in magazines for White men could be categorized as filling the decorative object role. This was the case for 22.0% and 15.8% of women in magazines targeting Black women and White women, respectively. Similarly, Reichert and Carpenter (2004) found that whereas women were suggestively dressed, partially clad, or nude about half the time in ads in women's magazines (e.g., *Redbook*) published in 2003, almost four out of five women (78%) were depicted in this manner in ads in men's magazines (e.g., *Esquire*). Analyses of photographs from *Maxim* and *Stuff* (two popular men's magazines) revealed that 80.5% of the women were depicted as sex objects (Krassas et al., 2003).

Magazine advertisements sexualize women in a second way. Evidence indicates that such sexual objectification occurs more frequently for women in magazine ads than for men (Plous & Neptune, 1997; Reichert, 2003; Soley & Kurzbard, 1986). For example, Reichert, Lambiase, Morgan, Carstarphen, and Zavoina (1999) found that women were three times more likely than men to be dressed in a sexually provocative manner in ads. In their analysis of fashion and fitness magazine advertisements published in 1992, W. J. Rudman and Verdi (1993) found

that female models were more likely than male models to be placed in submissive, sexually exploitive, and violent positions. In approximately 80% of the ads in their sample, female models were posed in sexually exploitive postures. In half of the ads studied, female models were "dismembered" (i.e., body parts were excluded or obscured) by the camera angle or logo placement. This was the case for only 17% of men in ads.

Findings document that such patterns have been increasing over time. Sullivan and O'Connor (1988) reported a 60% increase since 1970 in the portrayals of women in purely "decorative" roles. In an analysis of 1,871 ads from 1959, 1969, 1979, and 1989, Busby and Leichty (1993) found an increase in the number of decorative or alluring roles for women—from 54% in 1959 to 73% in 1989. Kang (1997) reported an increase in the display of women's bodies in advertisements—from 25% of ads in 1979 to 32% in 1991. In comparing the sexual imagery in ads from six magazines published over a 20-year-period, Reichert and Carpenter (2004) found a significant increase over time in the explicitness of female dress, male dress, and physical contact between women and men. Here, 28% of women were shown as suggestively dressed, partially clad, or nude in ads in 1983, and this increased to 49% in 2003. Only one study found no change over time in objectification or body display for women from 1955 to 2002 (Lindner, 2004). Overall, research shows magazines' growing focus on women's bodies as sexual objects for others' viewing pleasure.

Some researchers have found that such patterns differ depending on the race of the woman pictured or targeted as an audience for the magazine. In her analysis of images of women's sexuality in advertisements in eight Black- and White-oriented women's and men's magazines, Baker (2005) found that White women in women's magazines, more often than Black women in women's magazines, were represented with their faces hidden (thus placing an emphasis on their body and physical attributes). White women were also more likely than Black women to be represented as a decorative object in men's magazines. Similar findings were reported by Sanchez-Hucles, Hudgins, and Gamble (2005) in their comparison of

women in ads in mainstream, Black-oriented, and Latina magazines. In this study, 42% of ads in *Cosmopolitan* were found to contain suggestive body exposure, compared with 13% in *Ebony*, 32% in *Essence*, 0% in *Filipinas*, and 21% in *Latin Girl*. These patterns appear to persist over time.

Plous and Neptune (1997) examined 10 years of fashion advertisements drawn from six magazines geared toward White women (*Cosmopolitan, Glamour*), Black women (*Ebony, Essence*), and White men (*Esquire, GQ*). They found that body exposure of White women increased significantly over the 10 years, from approximately 34% in 1985-1986 to nearly 50% in 1993-1994. Ads displaying cleavage of White women nearly doubled, from 22.8% in 1985–1986 to 42.8% in 1993–1994. Breast exposure of Black women increased from 30% of ads in 1986-1988 to more than 40% by 1993–1994. If breast exposure is included with other types of body exposure, the percentage of 1993–1994 ads with body exposure rises to 52.9% for Black women and 61.6% for White women.

Despite evidence that ads are more sexual than ever (Lin, 1998; Reichert et al., 1999), there is also some indication that this is not what the public wants. A 1999 *Adweek* poll showed that 70% of respondents thought there was too much sexual imagery in advertising (Dolliver, 1999). Moreover, evidence indicates that such tactics may not be as effective as advertisers think. Advertising and marketing researchers have studied sex in advertising since the 1960s, and a general finding has been that attention and processing resources are directed toward sexual material including nudity, sexual behavior, and embedded sexual material (Lang, Wise, Lee, & Cai, 2003). Recent evidence, however, indicates that drawing attention does not always translate into selling products. In an experimental investigation involving 366 adults 18–54 years of age, Bushman (2005) demonstrated that participants exposed to programming featuring sexual commercials were less likely to remember the advertised brands and expressed less interest in buying those brands than participants who had seen ads with no sexual content.

These data indicate that young women and adult women are frequently, consistently, and increasingly presented in sexualized ways in advertising, creating an

environment in which being female becomes nearly synonymous with being a sexual object. Although advertisers are typically careful not to sexualize young girls directly, several advertising techniques do so indirectly:

- *There is some empirical evidence that children, and girls especially, are sometimes depicted as sexual objects or as counterparts to adult versions.* In their analysis of children appearing in advertisements drawn from five popular magazines (e.g., *Ladies Home Journal, Newsweek*) over a 40-year-period, O'Donohue, Gold and McKay (1997) found 38 ads (1.5%) that portrayed children in sexual ways. Moreover, 85% of these ads focused on girls, and this depiction of sexualized girls was found to increase significantly over time. In these ads, girls often appear with sexualized adult women and are posed in matching clothing or seductive poses.

- *Advertising imagery presents the public with both a "trickle up" and a "trickle down" framework on girls and women (Cook & Kaiser, 2004); thus, the distinction between women and girls may become blurred.* In this framework, young girls are "adultified" and adult women are "youthified." Merskin (2004) wrote that advertising is full of photographs in which women are "dressed down" to look like little girls and young girls are "dressed up" as grown women. Evidence for trickle-up includes the launching of new magazines *CosmoGirl* and *ElleGirl* in 2001 and *Teen Vogue* in 2003. These magazines "downsize" the sexualizing messages of their "mother" publications: how to please your man becomes how to please your prom date. The trickle-down or "youthification" side of the equation includes sexual portrayals of adult women as young girls in advertising (Kilbourne, 1999), often wearing schoolgirl clothing and licking lollipops or popsicles or wearing scaled-up versions of children's clothing styles like baby-doll dresses and tops, knee socks, and Mary Janes, all marketed as adult women's wear. This trend has led some critics to denounce "pedophilic fashion" (Menkes, 1994). As another example, a recent television fashion show (the *Victoria's Secret Fashion Show* on CBS in December 2005) featured a Christmas-themed segment in which the

highly sexualized runway models were dressed like little girls in baby doll teddies, pulling stuffed animals, and surrounded by toys.

- *Individual ads have employed youthful or "barely legal" celebrity adolescents in highly sexual ways.* News stories over the last 25 years have reported on these ads—both successful and controversial—that have been debated and sometimes pulled because of their presentation of sexualized young girls: the Brooke Shields Calvin Klein jeans ad, and in more recent years, the Abercrombie and Fitch catalogue, the Calvin Klein child underwear ads, the Christina Aguilera Skechers ads, and the Paris Hilton Carl's Jr. hamburger ads. Such ads often take a star popular with teens and preteens and present her in highly sexualized poses. Some explicitly play up innocence as sexy, as in one of the Skechers "naughty and nice" ads that featured Aguilera dressed as a schoolgirl in pigtails, with her shirt unbuttoned, licking a lollipop. Merskin (2004) concluded that

the message from advertisers and the mass media to girls (as eventual women) is they should always be sexually available, always have sex on their minds, be willing to be dominated and even sexually aggressed against, and they will be gazed on as sexual objects. (p. 120)

Products
Products designed for children and adolescents are big business; toy sales alone amounted to over $21 billion in 2005 (Ackman, 2006). These products are one of the sources of societal-level socialization and can shape children's development in a variety of ways. For example, cultural model theorists (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Duveen & Lloyd, 1990) have argued that marketers present schemas to young people for life events about which they have little experience and which then become cultural models for them. Although few systematic studies have been conducted to examine the prevalence or psychological impact of products that sexualize girls or women, the following sections on dolls, clothing, and cosmetics present examples of products marketed to girls that present images of sexy, sexualized persons.

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Dolls. Doll play is a popular activity for children, especially girls (Sutton-Smith, 1986). It is therefore of concern when sexualized dolls are marketed to girls. One series of dolls popular with girls as young as age 4 are the Bratz dolls, a multiethnic crew of teenagers who are interested in fashion, music, boys, and image (see www.bratz.com). Bratz girls are marketed in bikinis, sitting in a hot tub, mixing drinks, and standing around, while the "Boyz" play guitar and stand with their surf boards, poised for action (Brown & Lamb, 2005; Lamb & Brown, 2006). Moreover, Bratz dolls come dressed in sexualized clothing such as miniskirts, fishnet stockings, and feather boas. Although these dolls may present no more sexualization of girls or women than is seen in MTV videos, it is worrisome when dolls designed specifically for 4- to 8-year-olds are associated with an objectified adult sexuality. The objectified sexuality presented by these dolls, as opposed to the healthy sexuality that develops as a normal part of adolescence, is limiting for adolescent girls, and even more so for the very young girls who represent the market for these dolls.

With the success of the Bratz dolls, other doll manufacturers have followed suit. Mattel created "My Scene Barbie" and was promptly sued by Hasbro for "serial copycatting" (DeSmedt, 2006). The pudgy, cuddly, and asexual troll dolls that sold by the millions in the 1960s have been reinvented as Trollz (à la Bratz), hip teenagers who are "BFFL" (Best Friends for Life; see www.trollz.com) (Sheff, 2005). The full-lipped Sapphire, Amethyst, Onyx, Ruby, and Topaz sport big hair, miniskirts, bare midriffs, and "magical belly gems" and are being marketed to girls as young as 4–8 years old (Sheff, 2005). Recently, Hasbro was poised to release a series of dolls modeled after the musical group The Pussycat Dolls (a former burlesque troup known for their revealing clothing and highly sexualized lyrics), designed for 4- to 8-year-old girls. A grassroots protest campaign convinced them to pull this line of dolls (Goldiner, 2006).

> *. . . the thong, an item of clothing based on what a stripper might wear, is now offered in "tween" stores as well as women's wear departments, often with decorations that will specifically appeal to children.*

Although the hugely popular American Girl dolls, known for their championing of multiethnic girls' histories, have not been overtly sexualized, American Girl's recent co-branding with Bath & Body Works (T. Turner, 2005) may lead to product tie-ins that will encourage girls to develop a precocious body consciousness and one associated with narrowly sexual attractiveness.

Clothing. Whereas girls may have little control over how they are represented in the media, they have more control over the identity they create via their clothing choices (Cook & Kaiser, 2004). Labre and Walsh-Childers (2003) argued that teen magazines combine fashion and beauty into one category and that girls are encouraged to express their individuality through fashion choices. Indeed, as Lamb and Brown (2006) indicated, marketers specifically sell unique identity to girls via clothing, often pointing out how a girl might choose one day to look "punk" and another to look "innocent."

Given that girls may be developing their identity in part through the clothing they choose, it is of concern when girls at increasingly younger ages are invited to try on and wear teen clothes designed to highlight female sexuality. Wearing such clothing may make it more difficult for girls to see their own worth and value in any way other than sexually. The sexualization of girls in clothing advertisements appeared at least as early as 25 years ago, with such advertisements as a girl in jeans, dropping her rag doll by her side, with the headline "13 going on 18" (1981), and the controversial Calvin Klein ad in which the 15-year-old Brooke Shields declared, "Nothing comes between me and my Calvins" (Cook & Kaiser, 2004).

What seems to be a more recent phenomenon, however, is the production of "sexy" clothing in child and teen sizes. Pollett and Hurwitz (2004) noted that the thong, an item of clothing based on what a stripper might wear, is now offered in "tween" stores as well as children's wear departments, often with decorations that will specifi-

cally appeal to children. Retail stores such as Limited Too that focus on the so-called tween population (defined by the store as ages 7 up to teen years) sell sexy lingerie such as camisoles and lacy panties, items that once would have been marketed solely to adults (Lamb & Brown, 2006). In a recent content analysis of Halloween costumes, Nelson (2000) found that there was greater variation in the types of costumes marketed to boys than in those marketed to girls and that girls' costumes nearly always emphasized physical attractiveness (e.g., beauty queens and princesses). Among the few female villain costumes, sexual eroticism was emphasized (e.g., "Sexy Devil" or "Bewitched").

Cosmetics. The cosmetics industry has also seen the value of marketing their products to younger and younger girls. Toy shops sell "Girls Ultimate Spa and Perfume Kit" ("for use by up to eight kids and perfect for spa parties, sleepovers, and rainy days"); the Body Shop has lip glosses intended for teens and fruity lip glosses for preteens; Claire's, an accessory store in thousands of malls, sells lip gloss and perfume to young girls. Barbie has perfumes called "Free Spirit," "Summer Fun," and "Super Model."

French perfumeries have introduced perfumes to the market specifically for little girls (e.g., "smellies"). Villeneuve and de Grandi (1996) stated that "very young girls are targeted with a whole range from the leading brands, with *Fleur d'interdit* by Givenchy and *Tendre Poison* by Dior, lighter versions of *Interdit* and *Poison,* a reminder of the 'grown-up version' at gentler prices." The marketers at Yves Rocher write of their *Blackberry Cream* perfume, "Little girls love to wear fragrance just like Mom." Publishers of teen magazines such as *CosmoGIRL!* advertise cosmetics, perfumes, and personal hygiene products, along with fashion, to their anticipated audience of preteens and teens. These pitches appear to be effective. Marketing surveys show that the average 12- to 19-year-old girl uses fragrances five times a week (Chaplin, 1999). Although there is nothing wrong with girls wanting to smell nice and look attractive, advertisements for adult women's perfume overwhelmingly advertise seduction and sex appeal through the use of scent. Cosmetics and perfume are often associated specifically with the desire to be sexually attractive, a desire that seems misplaced in pre-pubescent girls.

Summary of Cultural Contributions

The evidence reviewed in this section demonstrates that women and girls are more likely than men and boys to be objectified and sexualized in a variety of media outlets (including television, magazines, sports media, and music videos), in advertising, and in several products that are marketed to children. Although much of this research has focused on adult or college-aged women rather than on girls or teenagers, portrayals of adult women provide girls with models that they can use to fashion their own behaviors, self-concepts, and identities. Although media images of girls directly affect girls, media images of women can also affect them through this indirect process.

Interpersonal Contributions

Societal messages that contribute to the sexualization of girls come not only from media and merchandise but also through girls' interpersonal relationships (e.g., with parents, teachers, and peers) (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Parents, teachers, and peers exist within the context of society's sexualizing representations and can be affected by them. Thus, these individuals may contribute to girls' sexualization when they convey their support for these cultural messages, either subtly or overtly. In addition, parents, teachers, and peers, as well as others (e.g., other family members, coaches, or strangers) sometimes sexually harass, abuse, or assault girls, a most destructive form of sexualization.

Research suggests that parents' gender schemas have a significant effect on children's gender self-concepts and gender-related attitudes toward others (Tenenbaum & Leaper, 2002). Fathers' attitudes in particular influence the gender typing of children's activities and whether children conform to this gender typing (McHale, Crouter, & Tucker, 1999). Although these studies investigated gender schemas rather than sexualization, they suggest that if parents' schemas include sexualized ideas about girls (which is likely given that the sexualization of women and heterosexual interactions are a key dimension of dominant cultural femininity; Bartky, 1990; Brown, 2003), these beliefs will be conveyed to their daughters and sons.

Because the current standard for sexy physical appearance for girls requires that girls be quite thin, research on

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the "thin ideal" is relevant to the sexualization of girls. There is evidence that parents, peers, and the media all support a "culture of dieting" for girls (Levine, Smolak, & Hayden, 1994; Nichter, 2000). Several studies (with mostly White participants) have shown that mother–daughter interactions affect how adolescent girls respond to cultural messages about thinness (Ogle & Damhorst, 2004) and that mothers' investment in their own slenderness and mothers' criticisms of their daughters' weight are correlated with disordered eating in their daughters (Hill, Weaver, & Blundell, 1990; Levine, Smolak, Moodey, Shuman, & Hessen, 1994).

More recently, in a 3-year qualitative, longitudinal study of eighth and ninth graders, Nichter (2000) found that White mothers routinely engaged in "fat talk" about their own bodies and the bodies of their daughters, concluding that "girls seemed to be surrounded by excessive concerns over physical appearance and talk of feeling fat" (p. 120). Fewer girls received messages from fathers, but when they did, it was in the form of criticism, "appraising looks, kidding quips, put-downs, and snide comments like 'When did you start getting boobs?'" (p. 140). This last comment suggests that body comments and fat talk do, at least for fathers, include specific references to sex-

> *African American girls . . . reported greater body satisfaction and self-esteem and less concern about their weight.*

uality and that comments on a girl's body are often conflated or experienced as comments on her sexuality. In addition, such encouragement for girls to look at their bodies rather than attend to their feelings teaches them to treat their bodies as objects to be decorated and made desirable for others; as they mature into adolescence, such looking becomes sexualized (Lamb, 2002, 2006; Tolman, 2002).

Nichter (2000) found a different pattern for African American girls, who received much more positive feedback about their appearance and "style" from their parents. They also said that they looked up to their mothers as role models who would teach them how to succeed in a hostile world. Although African American girls reported dieting at almost the same rates as European American girls, they also reported greater body satisfaction and self-esteem and less concern about their weight. Both African American and

European American girls thus seem to be internalizing the messages, whether positive or negative, they receive from their parents.

Parents can also contribute to the sexualization of their daughters in very direct and concrete ways—for example, by entering their 5-year-old daughter in a beauty pageant in which she and the other contestants engage in behaviors and practices that are socially associated with sexiness: wearing heavy makeup to emphasize full lips, long eyelashes, and flushed cheeks, high heels to emulate adult women, and revealing "evening gowns." Although relatively few girls actually participate in such pageants, they have become a topic of interest in the news, documentaries, and advertising, in particular regarding whether this precocious sexualization is problematic for these or other girls. In this way, the participation of a few may in fact contribute to the sexualization of many.

Some parents have agreed to let their daughters undergo plastic surgery in order to become sexier or more attractive. Over 77,000 invasive surgical procedures were performed on teens 18 years old and younger in 2005, a 15% increase since 2000 (American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2006a). Minors cannot obtain such surgery unless their parents consent; parents typically finance the surgery, as well. Because these procedures are expensive (and generally not covered by health insurance), only girls from upper-middle-class or wealthy families are likely to have access to them.

Teachers may also contribute to the sexualization of girls. In her ethnographic research in preschools, Martin (1998) found that girls were encouraged to play dress up more than boys and that teachers encouraged girls in their dress-up games to play at being sexualized adult women. This often involved looking in mirrors, walking in "fancy" high heels, and "vamping." Teachers may also communicate messages to girls that promote a thin-ideal body image. For example, one study showed that teachers have negative attitudes toward girls whose bodies do not conform to the thin ideal (Villimez, Eisenberg, & Carroll, 1986). In this study, teachers rated children in kindergarten through

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fourth grade. Heaviness and body "bulk" were negatively correlated with teachers' ratings of girls' competence but positively correlated with their ratings of boys' competence. Although the thin ideal is conceptually distinct from sexualization, the two are often connected. In another study (Rolón-Dow, 2004), middle-school teachers' descriptions of their Latina (Puerto Rican) students focused almost exclusively on the appearance and sexuality of the girls. The girls' "hypersexuality" was seen as being incompatible with academic achievement.

Peers also participate in the sexualization of girls. Thorne's (1993) research on girls and boys together on the playground showed that girls are marked as sexual by boys at a very early age, quite independent of their own behavior. Nichter (2000) and Eder (1995) found that girls police each other to ensure conformance with ideals of thinness and sexiness, and Brown (2003) found that teenage girls will seek revenge by negatively sexualizing girls whom they perceive as a threat (e.g., by labeling them as "sluts"). Several authors (Levy, 2005b; P. Paul, 2005; Pollet & Hurwitz, 2004) have argued that girls now equate popularity with sexiness and view behaving in a sexual way with boys as a pathway to power. Indeed, previous research has shown that girls' popularity is based in part on physical attractiveness and social precocity regarding interest in boys (Adler, Kless, & Adler, 1992). Merten's (2004) ethnographic study of (mostly White) suburban Chicago junior high school girls also supports this idea. He found that popularity required girls to construct a femininity that focused on physical attractiveness and "emphasized the male gaze" (p. 364).

Sexual harassment by boys and men is a regular part of school and work life. In the American Association of University Women's (2001) "Hostile Hallways" study, 63% of girls reported experiencing sexual harassment "often" or "occasionally." The most common form of harassment was being made the object of sexual jokes, comments, gestures, or looks; next most frequent was being touched, grabbed, pinched, or brushed up against in a sexual way. Of girls who reported physical sexual harassment, 90% had been harassed by a student, 45% by a former student, and 6% by a teacher.

Peers appear to play a very direct role in the sexualization of girls, making sexual commentary and evaluation in school. One recent study explored early adolescents' experiences with sexual harassment from peers (Lindberg, Grabe, & Hyde, in press). Even 10- to 12-year-olds, most of whom had not yet completed the fifth grade, reported significant and frequent experiences of sexual harassment in school. Although both boys and girls reported such experiences, the nature and effects of these experiences differed. Girls' pubertal development predicted more peer sexual harassment. That is, girls experience more sexually harassing comments as their bodies mature. These experiences, in turn, lead girls to experience greater feelings of shame about their bodies.

Particularly damaging forms of sexualization include sexual abuse and being prostituted or sexually trafficked. Estimates of the prevalence of child sexual abuse vary, in part because of methodological differences between studies (e.g., how sexual abuse is defined). However, epidemiological and other nationally representative studies generally place lifetime prevalence rates for women at 15%-25%, with men experiencing sexual abuse less frequently (Elliott, 1997; Molnar, Buka, & Kessler, 2001; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998; Vogeltanz et al., 1999).

Girls and women in prostitution are by definition sexualized—objectified and treated as sexual commodities. In the case of girls under age 18, prostitution is legally considered sexual abuse; it is often instead described as commercial sexual exploitation of children or child prostitution. Most women over the age of 18 in prostitution began prostituting when they were adolescents. Boyer, Chapman, and Marshall (1993) interviewed 50 women prostituting in escort services, on the street, in strip clubs, through phone sex, and in massage parlors (brothels) in Seattle, WA. All of these women began prostituting between the ages of 12 and 14. In another study, Nadon, Koverola, and Schludermann (1998) found that 89% of their respondents had begun prostitution before the age of 16. It is difficult to accurately assess the number of girls currently in prostitution, but a multimethod study by Estes and Weiner (2001) estimated that between 244,000 and 325,000 American children and adolescents are at risk each year of

being victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Childhood sexual abuse puts girls at risk for prostitution (Nadon et al., 1998; Silbert & Pines, 1981, 1982).

Intrapsychic Contributions

Many parents as well as marketers would likely argue that girls *want* the clothes and accessories that make them "sexy" and that it is difficult to convince teenagers and younger girls to make less sexualizing choices. As girls participate actively in a consumer culture (often buying products and clothes designed to make them look physically appealing and sexy) and make choices about how to behave and whom to become (often styling their identities after the sexy celebrities who populate their cultural landscape), they are, in effect, sexualizing themselves. Keen observers of how social processes operate, girls anticipate that they will accrue social advantages, such as popularity, for buying into the sexualization of girls (i.e., themselves), and they fear social rejection for not doing so (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Nichter, 2000; Tolman, 2002).

A focus on physical attractiveness is not new; over 3 decades ago, Unger (1979) argued that physical beauty can translate into power for girls. But the definition of attractiveness differs depending on the tastes of the culture. Whereas yesterday's culture may have equated "domesticity" with attractiveness in women, today's culture equates "sexy" with attractiveness (Wolf, 1991). Moreover, there is evidence that physical appearance was not always the prime currency for girls' social success. Brumberg (1997) examined diaries of adolescent girls in the United States over the past 100 years to explore how they discussed self-improvement. Whereas girls of earlier eras focused on improving their studies and becoming more well-mannered, in the last 20 years that Brumberg studied, girls almost exclusively described changing their bodies and enhancing their physical appearance as the focus of their self-improvement.

Girls sexualize themselves when they think of themselves mostly or exclusively in sexual terms and when they equate their sexiness with a narrow standard of physical attractiveness. They also sexualize themselves when they

think of themselves in objectified terms. Psychological researchers have identified *self-objectification* (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; McKinley & Hyde, 1996) as a key process whereby girls learn to think of and treat their own bodies as objects of others' desires. In self-objectification, girls internalize an observer's perspective on their physical selves and learn to treat themselves as objects to be looked at and evaluated for their appearance. Though portraying oneself solely as a sexual object to be looked at is sometimes viewed by girls and women as exercising control over their sexuality (e.g., at some social networking Web sites), presentation of the self in this way can be viewed as a form of self-objectification.

There is ample evidence that self-objectification is common among girls and women. For example, Slater and Tiggemann (2002) found that girls as young as 12 years old placed greater emphasis on their body's appearance than on its competence. In addition, many studies have demonstrated that girls and women self-objectify more than boys and men do (e.g., Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005).

Most studies have focused on European Americans, but one study of ninth- and tenth-grade girls showed that most girls, regardless of race, engaged in self-objectification (McConnell, 2001). That is, they internalized an observer's standard of appearance and engaged in activities designed to enhance their sexual attractiveness. In addition, African American and White girls did not differ in the amount of time they spent enhancing their physical appearance, although African American girls spent more time on their hair and White girls spent more time on their makeup. Nichter's (2000) study, however, suggests that the time African American girls spend on their appearance may have more to do with creating an individualized and ethnically derived "style" (i.e., one that involves personality and attitude, in addition to physical appearance) than with adhering to the narrow vision of the "ideal girl" depicted in the media. Thus, ethnic differences concerning the meaning attached to self-objectifying practices may exist.

In addition to making sexualizing choices regarding clothing, hair, and makeup, girls and teens sometimes "act

out" in sexually precocious ways. Given the highly sexualized cultural milieu in which most girls are immersed, these behaviors may simply be the result of modeling. It is important to note, however, that sexualized behavior in children (e.g., compulsive sex play, persistent and sometimes public self-stimulation, inappropriate sexual overtures to others) is one of the common sequelae of childhood sexual abuse (Friedrich et al., 2001; Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 1993; Letourneau, Schoenwald, & Sheidow, 2004). In this case, girls are sexualizing themselves through their behavior (i.e., they are presenting themselves as sexual objects for others to use and/or they are engaging in age-inappropriate sexual behavior). It would be inaccurate, though, to state that girls are freely choosing these behaviors. Rather, the mental functions and cognitive processes necessary for healthy sexual decision-making have likely been damaged through the experience of sexual abuse victimization (Zurbriggen & Freyd, 2004), leading to precocious or inappropriate sexual behavior.

These data support the contention that girls sometimes participate in and contribute to their own sexualization. However, the surrounding cultural milieu (and, for some girls, their experiences of childhood sexual abuse victimization) have encouraged and facilitated this process. Thus, girls' choices are not fully independent of cultural or past interpersonal influences. In addition, it is important to remember that girls are fully capable of agency and resistance in this area. (We return to this point in the Positive Alternatives and Approaches to Counteracting the Influence of Sexualization section, pp. 36–42.)

Summary of Evidence for the Sexualization of Girls

Many studies have suggested that the culture delivers abundant messages about the objectification and sexualization of adult women and that this is the cultural milieu in which girls develop. Parents, schools, and peers sometimes contribute to the sexualization of girls, and girls themselves sometimes adopt a sexualized and self-objectified identity. Additional research is needed that (a) focuses specifically on girls rather than on adult women; (b) further explores the ways in which parents,

schools, and peers sexualize girls; and (c) addresses girls' self-sexualization—how often it occurs and what factors encourage it. In the next section, we examine research and theory suggesting that the sexualization of women and girls may have a variety of negative consequences for girls as well as for others in our culture.

Consequences of the Sexualization of Girls

In this section we describe psychological theories concerning mechanisms whereby people (girls included) might be affected by sexualization. We also describe some of the special vulnerabilities due to developmental stage that are relevant to the sexualization of girls. We then describe research showing that the sexualization of girls is associated with many negative consequences.

Mechanisms by Which Sexualization Has an Impact

Psychology offers several theories to explain how the sexualization of girls and women could influence girls' well-being:

- *Socialization theories* describe how girls receive and anticipate direct rewards and punishments from socialization agents regarding sexualization.
- *Sociocultural theories* point out that girls exist within a cultural milieu in which direct reinforcement is not always necessary for internalization or activation of a sexualized standard to be cultivated or for girls to engage in early sexualized behaviors.
- *Cognitive theories* highlight the automatic and unconscious nature of some of the schemas and other cognitive structures that develop through socialization.
- *Psychoanalytic theories* point to early experiences as formative in the development of the self.
- *Objectification theory* combines all of these approaches to argue that girls' observations of the world around them contribute to an internalization that produces self-sexualization.

Socialization Theories

Social learning theory (e.g., Bussey & Bandura, 1999), cognitive developmental theory (e.g., Warin, 2000), and gender schema theory (e.g., Bem, 1985) all offer explanations for the learning of culturally appropriate gender roles, ideologies, practices, and behaviors via reinforcement from others and modeling. According to socialization theories, girls learn about women's expected roles in the world and strive to enact these expectations, because doing so brings specific rewards and because being consistent with expectations is itself rewarding. In addition, violations of the boundaries of these roles or ideologies can be met with punishment, denigration, and even violence. Socialization theories help us see that girls' understanding of appropriate femininity is not "natural" or innate but is acquired through developmental processes whereby girls draw information from the adults and peers, real and fictional, around them.

Sociocultural Theories

Other psychological theories emphasize the culture or context within which girls develop and through which meanings are created. According to these theories, choices about one's appearance and behavior, as well as reinforcement from socialization agents, exist within a cultural milieu in which only certain options are available, recognized as existing, or sanctioned. Cultivation theory (Gerbner et al., 1994) proposes that when people are exposed to media content or other socialization agents, they gradually come to cultivate or adopt beliefs about the world that coincide with the images they have been viewing or messages they have been hearing. Agenda setting and framing theories (Kosicki, 1993) highlight the fact that important media outlets focus attention on certain issues or domains, in effect telling girls what is and is not salient or important. Feminist psychodynamic theories (e.g., Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991) and social construction theories (e.g., Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988) emphasize the messages culture delivers regarding femininity and the ways in which such messages maintain gender relations as power relations.

Cognitive Theories

Social psychologists have demonstrated that many attitudes and beliefs operate, at least in part, on an "implicit" or unconscious (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995) and automatic (Bargh & Ferguson, 2000) level. For example, in numerous studies, most White participants show an automatic association between African Americans' names or faces and negative adjectives (Cunningham, Preacher, & Banaji, 2001). This is true for children as well as adults (Baron & Banaji, 2006). Automatic gender stereotypes and attitudes operate in both women and men (Banaji & Greenwald, 1995; L. Rudman & Kilianski, 2000), and other types of automatic associations (e.g., a link between power and sex; Zurbriggen, 2000) are present in some people. Although these attitudes, beliefs, and associations are automatic, they are not immutable (Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001). For example, exposure to female leaders led to a decrease in women's automatic gender stereotyping (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004). Schemas and beliefs concerning objectification and sexualization may also operate implictly and automatically.

Psychoanalytic Theories

Psychoanalytic theories argue that "parental seduction" in the form of overstimulation or boundary crossing can cause guilt and conflict and can produce symptoms that affect the very character of developing children as well as their ability to form relationships in the future (J. Greenberg, 2001; Shengold, 1989). Trauma theory and research show that the early introduction of adult sexual material and behavior in the lives of children through abuse can cause lifelong struggles with their sexual development and with their ability to form intimate relationships (Herman, 1992; Scharff & Scharff, 1994). Shengold (1989) argued that the mechanism through which such effects occur supposes a natural progression of development, which, when interrupted by the introduction of material or behaviors that are too much for a child to bear, causes overwhelming feelings that must be defended against. In psychoanalytic theories, the defenses that explain self-sexualization and risky sexual behavior that leads to retraumatization are sometimes called "enactment" and sometimes "repetition" (Rachman, Kennedy, & Yard, 2005).

Objectification Theory

Objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; McKinley & Hyde, 1996) is the theory that most directly describes the process by which girls internalize the sexualizing messages of culture. This theory focuses particularly on the impact of the sexual objectification of female bodies as the cultural milieu in which girls exist and develop. According to this theory, girls internalize and reproduce within their own self-schemas this objectified perspective, an effect referred to as "self-objectification." Self-objectification involves adopting a third-person perspective on the physical self and constantly assessing one's own body in an effort to conform to the culture's standards of attractiveness. Self-objectification in a culture in which a woman is a "good object" when she meets the salient cultural standard of "sexy" leads girls to evaluate and control their own bodies more in terms of their sexual desirability to others than in terms of their own desires, health, wellness, achievements, or competence.

Developmental Processes Relevant to the Sexualization of Girls

Cognitive Development

Children's cognitive development affects their ability to critically process cultural messages. According to researchers, very young children are highly susceptible to marketing (e.g., Borzekowski & Robinson, 1999), they have difficulty distinguishing between commercial and regular programming on TV (Atkin, 1982), and only after they are approximately 8 years old can they recognize that the purpose of advertisements is to persuade them to want to purchase something (Kunkel & Roberts, 1991). Girls' understanding of sexuality is also limited by their cognitive development. Linn (2005) therefore asked rhetorically, "How does a 7-year-old understand the plastic sexuality of Britney Spears? How do 10-year-olds cope with pressure to dress and act in sexually provocative ways?" (p. 115). Girls have much less ability than adults to comprehend and cope with cultural messages.

> *"How does a 7-year-old understand the plastic sexuality of Britney Spears? How do 10-year-olds cope with pressure to dress and act in sexually provocative ways?"*

Identity Formation

Identity formation is a developmental hallmark of adolescence in Western cultures. Research has shown identity to be a major concern for adolescent girls (e.g., Brown, 1991), for whom every day can feel like a struggle to fit in. Strasburger and Wilson (2002) argued that preadolescents and adolescents are like actors as they experiment with different features of their newly forming identities and try on different social "masks." This plasticity may make them especially susceptible to the messages society conveys, particularly when marketers link popularity and social acceptance to their products. Thus, sexualized messages and products may be more easily accepted during this developmental stage.

Age-Related Changes in Self-Esteem

Just at the time when girls begin to construct identity, they are more likely to suffer losses in self-esteem. Research has documented losses in self-esteem for girls in adolescence (e.g., Harter, 1998; Major, Barr, & Zubek, 1999), and perceived physical attractiveness is closely linked to self-esteem (Polce-Lynch, Myers, & Kilmartin, 1998). In particular, Tolman, Impett, Tracy, and Michael (2006) have shown that in the eighth grade, girls who objectify their bodies more have much lower self-esteem. For this reason, diminishing self-esteem arising in early adolescence may make girls particularly vulnerable to cultural messages that promise them popularity, effectiveness, and social acceptance through the right "sexy" look. On the other hand, the drop in self-esteem may be related to how responsive they are to these cultural messages.

Impact on Girls' Health and Well-Being

In this section, we describe and document the consequences of the sexualization of girls and women. Ample evidence indicates that sexualization has negative effects in a variety of domains, including cognitive functioning, physical and mental health, sexuality, and attitudes and

beliefs. We also briefly review some of the negative consequences of sexual abuse and exploitation (extreme forms of sexualization), noting that because sexual exploitation often involves violence, some of the findings reported in this section might not be applicable to sexualization more broadly.

Cognitive and Physical Functioning

Perhaps the most insidious consequence of self-objectification is that it fragments consciousness. Chronic attention to physical appearance leaves fewer cognitive resources available for other mental and physical activities. One study demonstrated this fragmenting quite vividly (Fredrickson et al., 1998). While alone in a dressing room, college students were asked to try on and evaluate either a swimsuit or a sweater. While they waited for 10 minutes wearing the garment, they completed a math test. The results revealed that young women in swimsuits performed significantly worse on the math problems than did those wearing sweaters. No differences were found for young men. In other words, thinking about the body and comparing it to sexualized cultural ideals disrupted mental capacity. Recent research has shown that this impairment occurs among African American, Latina, and Asian American young women (Hebl, King, & Lin, 2004) and extends beyond mathematics to other cognitive domains including logical reasoning and spatial skills (Gapinski, Brownell, & LaFrance, 2003).

The implications are stunning and suggest that sexualization may contribute to girls' dropping out of higher level mathematics in high school. Studies show that as girls develop through adolescence, their science and math self-concepts are less stable than those of boys (e.g., Simpkins, Davis-Kean, & Eccles, 2006). For example, girls begin to underestimate their math ability relative to boys and show diminished interest in upper level, optional math classes in high school (Linver, Davis-Kean, & Eccles, 2002). Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) have pointed out that these declines in estimations of ability and the value girls place on math begin around puberty, when their bodies mature. Studies show that single-sex math classes lead girls to feel less self-conscious and improve their math performance substantially (Rutti, 1997). This may not be solely because boys would otherwise dominate the classroom (one popular explanation for the success of single-sex math classes for girls) but also because without boys, girls can literally take their minds off their own bodies and think more effectively.

Self-objectification appears to disrupt physical performance as well. One study explored self-objectification's relation to the commonly observed phenomenon of "throwing like a girl" (Young, 1980). Girls do indeed appear to have a distinctive way of throwing. Compared with boys, girls tend not to bring their whole bodies into a throw, instead remaining relatively immobile except for the throwing arm, which is often not extended completely (Roberton & Halverson, 1984). Fredrickson and Harrison (2005) had 200 Anglo and African American girls, 10–17 years of age, throw a softball as hard as they could against a distant gymnasium wall. They found that the extent to which girls viewed their bodies as objects and were concerned about their bodies' appearance predicted poorer motor performance on the softball throw. Self-objectification, it appears, limits the form and effectiveness of girls' physical movements.

Ample research shows that physical activity leads to experiences of positive mood and feelings of confidence (Plante, 1993), is associated with achieving and maintaining physical health (President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, 1997), and improves cognitive performance (Etnier et al., 1997). If the practices of sexualization and the resultant self-objectification in which many girls engage serve to limit their physical activities, then girls and women are likely to suffer a wide range of consequences for their overall health and well-being. For example, Dowling (2000) suggested that girls and women who are physically active and confident are more able to defend themselves from physical attack and abuse.

Taken together, the work on the cognitive and physical decrements associated with self-objectification suggests that sexualization practices may function to keep girls "in their place" as objects of sexual attraction and beauty, significantly limiting their free thinking and movement in the world.

Body Dissatisfaction and Appearance Anxiety

Sexualization and objectification undermine confidence in and comfort with one's own body, leading to a host of negative emotional consequences, such as shame, anxiety, and even self-disgust. The evidence to support this claim comes from studies of self-objectification (mostly using college-aged samples) and from experimental and correlational studies of exposure to media emphasizing a narrow ideal of women's sexual attractiveness.

Studies based on objectification theory have shown that the near-constant monitoring of appearance that accompanies self-objectification leads to increased feelings of shame about one's body (e.g., Fredrickson et al., 1998; McKinley, 1998, 1999; Tiggemann & Slater, 2001). Shame is an emotion that occurs when one perceives one's failure to meet cultural standards of conduct (Lewis, 2000). Individuals who feel shame deem the whole self as deficient and typically have the urge to hide or disappear. Given that so few women meet the dominant cultural standard for an attractive, sexy appearance (Wolf, 1991), it is not surprising that a girl's chronic comparison of her own body to this impossible cultural standard would result in feelings of inadequacy and shame.

A second emotional consequence of self-objectification is appearance anxiety, which is manifested by checking and adjusting one's appearance. Not knowing exactly when or how one's body will be looked at and evaluated creates anxiety about exposure. Girls' fashions arguably compound the opportunities for this kind of anxiety: Tight-fitting "belly shirts," micro-miniskirts, and plunging necklines require regular body monitoring and a kind of chronic vigilance about whether everything is in place. Indeed, numerous studies have shown stronger appearance anxiety in those young women who internalize a sexualizing gaze as their primary view of self (e.g., Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001); other studies have shown that young women, in general, will have stronger appearance anxiety after viewing media portrayals of idealized women's bodies (Monro & Huon, 2005) or after being exposed to sexualizing words that commonly appear on magazine covers, such as *sexy* or *shapely* (T-A. Roberts & Gettman, 2004).

In one study of adolescent girls, Slater and Tiggemann (2002) found that self-objectification correlated with both body shame and appearance anxiety. For girls as young as 12 and 13 years of age, viewing oneself primarily from the perspective of an observer and emphasizing features like "attractiveness" and "sex appeal" with respect to one's body was related to higher levels of anxiety about appearance and feelings of shame.

In addition to leading to feelings of shame and anxiety, sexualizing treatment and self-objectification can generate feelings of disgust toward one's physical self. Girls may feel they are "ugly" and "gross" or untouchable. In the study in which college students were asked to try on and evaluate swimwear, young women, regardless of body size, responded to the experience with feelings of "disgust, distaste, and revulsion" compared with those who tried on a sweater (Fredrickson et al., 1998). The authors speculated that standing alone in a dressing room and seeing their bodies in the mirror led the young women to imagine critical viewers, and this made them feel not only ashamed but repulsive.

Complementing the evidence from studies on self-objectification, strong empirical evidence indicates that exposure to ideals of sexual attractiveness in the media is associated with greater body dissatisfaction among girls and young women (for recent reviews, see Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002; Holmstrom, 2004). At least 38 experiments, 32 surveys, and 2 interview studies have been conducted investigating these harmful connections, most of which yielded the expected, statistically reliable results. For example, Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2004) exposed high school girls and boys either to "beauty ideal" or to "nonappearance" commercials. Girls exposed to beauty ideal commercials expressed significantly increased body dissatisfaction. S. L. Turner, Hamilton, Jacobs, Angood, and Dwyer (1997) examined the impact of exposure to fashion magazines on women's body image. Young women who viewed fashion magazines versus news magazines preferred to weigh less, were less satisfied with their bodies, were more frustrated about their weight, were more preoccupied with the desire to be thin, and were more afraid of getting fat than were their peers who viewed news magazines.

Many of the studies to date have mostly consisted of White samples. Because the cultural ideal for female beauty is racialized (i.e., the idealized beautiful woman is White), exposure to these idealized images may affect girls of color differently. Indeed, the evidence from studies of African American girls suggests that identification with the idealized standard may be an important predictor of negative outcomes. When exposed to sexualized women in the media who are White, African American girls did not demonstrate negative body-image effects of objectifying media (Frisby, 2004; Makkar & Strube, 1995). Moreover, qualitative inter-views of Black and White high school girls (Duke, 2000; Milkie, 1999) suggest that Black girls are largely uninterested in the beauty images of mainstream teen magazines because they conflict with African American standards of attractive-ness and appeal.

Frisby (2004) found, however, that when Black women were exposed to idealized images of African American models, those who were initially lower in self-esteem were later less satisfied with their own bodies. Furthermore, Botta (2003) found that for both White and Black teenage girls, the more they idealized TV images and compared themselves and their friends to those images, the stronger their drive to be thin and the more dissatisfied they were with their bodies. Parmariega, Gustavson, and Gustavson (1994) found that many Black female stars in the film, music, and fashion industry are now just as thin as their White counterparts. This finding, combined with the results reported previously, suggest that body dissatisfaction among African American girls may increase.

Body dissatisfaction may spur teens to seek plastic surgery, a decision that incurs health risks and comes at a high financial cost. Between 2000 and 2005, there was a 15% increase in teen (age 18 and younger) invasive cosmetic surgery and a 7% increase in minimally invasive cosmetic procedures (e.g., botox injections, chemical peels, laser hair removal), according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (2006a). Given that the most common

> *. . . for both White and Black teenage girls, the more they idealized TV images and compared themselves . . . to those images, the stronger their drive to be thin and the more dissatisfied they were with their bodies.*

procedures sought by teenagers are breast enlargements, nose and ear reshaping, and liposuction ("More Teens Opt for Plastic Surgery," 2000), it is safe to assume that the majority of teens receiving plastic surgery are girls.

Indeed, from 2002 to 2003, the number of girls 18 years old and younger who got breast implants nearly tripled, from 3,872 to 11,326 (Olding & Zuckerman, 2004). In one study, two thirds of 16-year-old girls in a suburban high school knew someone who had undergone cosmetic surgery (Pearl & Weston, 2003). Many of these girls desired it themselves, and the most desired procedures were liposuction for the reduction of fat in the hips, thighs, and belly and breast augmentation (Pearl & Weston, 2003). The fact that parents must consent to these procedures for their daughters under age 18 (and that parents often pay for the procedures) illustrates that girls' self-sexualization desires and practices occur in a broader context. In this case, they are likely to be directly supported by parents.

Body image dissatisfaction may also support girls' use not only of cosmetics and beauty products but also of expensive salon treatments such as facials, manicures, pedicures, waxing, and eyebrow shaping. Teenage girls 12 to 19 years of age spent over $8 billion on beauty products (cosmetics, fragrances, and hair/beauty salons) in 1997—spending more in this product category than in any other except clothing/jewelry (Parks, 1998). Expensive beauty products and treatments are unlikely to be affordable for low-income girls. Self-sexualization may serve, then, to widen the gulf many lower-income girls undoubtedly feel between themselves and those with the financial means to look "sexy" and thus be socially popular.

Mental Health
Research links sexualization with three of the most common mental health problems of girls and women:
- eating disorders
- low self-esteem
- depression or depressed mood

Frequent exposure to cultural beauty ideals via the media has been shown to be associated with higher rates of eating disorders, both for individuals and for the population at large. Indeed, Lucas, Beard, O'Fallon, and Kurland (1991) studied the incidence of anorexia nervosa among 10- to 19-year-old girls during a 50-year period and found that it paralleled changes in fashion and idealized body image. The thin ideal preceded the times when the rates of anorexia nervosa were highest. For individual women, findings across several studies indicate associations between exposure to female beauty ideals and disordered eating attitudes and symptoms, such that greater exposure to thin-ideal media has been associated with higher levels of dieting, exercising, and disordered eating symptomatology (e.g., Abramson & Valene, 1991; Harrison, 2000; Hofschire & Greenberg, 2001; Stice, Schupak-Neuberg, Shaw, & Stein, 1994; Thomsen, Weber, & Brown, 2002). For example, Botta (2000) reported that more frequent television viewing was associated with increased bulimic symptomatology for White teenage girls. Indeed, a recent meta-analysis testing links between media exposure and women's behavior and beliefs related to eating reported a small ($d = .29$) but statistically reliable effect of media exposure across 8 experimental and 12 correlational studies (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2006).

Particularly strong evidence of the media's role in shaping girls' body image can be seen in before and after analyses of cultures that are new to Western media. For example, in a study on adolescent ethnic Fijian girls in Western Fiji, Becker (2004) found that the beginnings of weight and body shape preoccupation, purging behavior to control weight, and body disparagement were linked to the introduction of television. Before television, traditional Fijian culture emphasized a robust body shape and based notions of identity not on the body but on family, community, and relationships. Three years after television was introduced, girls' eating behaviors and attitudes about their bodies had shifted, and rates of disordered eating had increased.

Research also links exposure to sexualized female ideals with lower self-esteem, negative mood, and depressive symptoms among adolescent girls and young women. These associations have been examined in at least five correlational studies and in multiple experiments, demonstrating causal connections. For example, adolescent girls exposed to advertisements featuring idealized women reported significant increases in state depression scores (Durkin & Paxton, 2002). Similar effects have been shown for undergraduate women exposed to idealized images, especially among those who were already dieting (Mills, Polivy, Herman, & Tiggemann, 2002). At the same time, frequent exposure to mainstream media that feature female ideals, such as movies, prime-time television, and music videos, were associated with lower self-esteem among Black and Latino/a youth (Rivadeneyra, Ward, & Gordon, in press; L. M. Ward, 2004b).

Studies also show that self-objectification is associated with negative mental health outcomes in adolescent girls. For example, Tolman et al. (2006) found that in early adolescence, girls who had a more objectified relationship with their bodies were more likely to experience depression and had lower self-esteem. Similarly, Harrison and Fredrickson (2003) reported that among Black and White adolescent girls, self-objectification was a significant predictor of depression, body shame, and disordered eating, even when controlling for race, grade in school, and body mass index.

In one demonstration of these trends, Hawkins, Richards, Granley, and Stein (2004) exposed undergraduate women to 40 full-page photographs from *Cosmopolitan, Vogue,* and *Glamour.* For students in the experimental group, these ads contained female models; for those in the control group, only no-model ads were used. Findings indicated that young women exposed to the idealized models indicated more eating disorder symptoms than women in the control group, as well as more negative mood states and lower self-esteem.

Physical Health
In addition to the mental health consequences of sexualization, research suggests that girls' and women's physical health may also be negatively, albeit indirectly, affected. For example, studies have established an important link between body dissatisfaction and the onset of cigarette smoking among adolescent girls (e.g., Stice & Shaw, 2003). One theorized reason for this relationship is girls' belief

that smoking will enable them to control their weight and thus meet standards of physical appearance considered desirable (Camp, Klesges, & Relyea, 1993). Newer research has shown that this relationship may be mediated by self-objectification, a feature of sexualization. In one study, college-aged women who had a more sexually objectified standard for their physical appearance (emphasizing sexual attractiveness, for example, over health and competence) were more likely to be smokers (Harrell, 2002). These studies begin to suggest that sexualization experiences may lead to dangerous addictive health behaviors.

Sexuality

Sexual well-being is an important part of healthy development and overall well-being (Satcher, 2001). Research indicates that among adults, healthy sexuality is related to greater intimacy (Weekes, 2002), higher self-esteem (Hurlbert & Whittaker, 1991), low levels of stress (Ellison, 2000; Weekes, 2002), personal happiness (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994), and other positive benefits (Planned Parenthood, 2003). Yet emerging evidence suggests that the sexualization of girls has negative consequences on girls' ability to develop healthy sexuality.

. . . studies have established an important link between body dissatisfaction and the onset of cigarette smoking among adolescent girls.

Self-objectification has been linked directly to diminished sexual health among adolescent girls. More specifically, Impett, Schooler, and Tolman (2006) found that White and Latina adolescent girls with a more objectified view of their bodies had diminished sexual health, measured by decreased condom use and diminished sexual assertiveness. Studies also show that supporting women's sexual objectification may affect how women view their own reproductive body functions. L. M. Ward, Merriwether, and Caruthers (2006b) found that undergraduate women who frequently watch music videos or read women's magazines, who attribute greater realism to media content, or who identify strongly with popular TV characters were also more accepting of sexually

objectifying notions of women and of other traditional gender ideologies. At the same time, accepting these views of women and their bodies was associated with expressing more negative attitudes toward breastfeeding and toward the "functional" aspects of one's own body (e.g., menstruation, body sweat).

Other evidence suggests that frequent exposure to narrow ideals of attractiveness may affect adolescents' perceptions of their own sexual experiences, perhaps contributing to unrealistic expectations. For example, Baran (1976) found that high school students who thought that TV accurately portrayed sexual behavior were more likely to be dissatisfied with either their first experience of intercourse or with their virginity. Similarly, L. M. Ward and Averitt (2005) reported that heavier reading of popular men's magazines and stronger identification with popular male TV characters was associated with undergraduate (male and female) virgins' expectation that their first coital experience would be more negative. T-A. Roberts and Gettman (2004) found that after exposure to objectifying words found on magazine covers, young women expressed reduced interest in sexual relationships. Moreover, Strouse and Buerkel-Rothfuss (1987) found that for undergraduate women, MTV consumption was the most powerful predictor of their notions about sexuality and love relationships, which was not true for men.

Both theoretical arguments and empirical evidence suggest that, in addition to effects that occur during adolescence, the sexualization of girls may ultimately influence adult women's sexuality by contributing to women's body shame and self-objectification. The sexualization and objectification of women induce negative feelings in girls about their bodies in adolescence, which ultimately may lead to sexual problems in adulthood (Brotto, Heiman, & Tolman, in press; Graham, Saunders, Milhausen, & McBride, 2004; Tolman, Spencer, Rosen-Reynoso, & Porche, 2003;

Wiederman, 2000). A woman who has learned to fear negative evaluations of her body may be more focused on her partner's judgments of her than on her own desires, safety, and pleasure. Focusing critically on one's own appearance can limit the pleasure drawn from these sexual experiences (Wiederman, 2001) and can make it difficult for women to enact safer sex practices (Wingood & DiClemente, 1992). At the same time, a woman who has been socialized to separate from her inner feelings and experiences of arousal and desire may find it difficult to assert her desires or feel entitled to satisfaction in sexual situations. She may instead opt to let events unfold based on her partner's wants and interests.

Empirical evidence supports these concerns. Findings indicate that women with high body dissatisfaction engage in less sexual activity and are especially apprehensive about sexual situations in which their bodies can be seen. Conversely, women who feel more positively about and comfortable with their bodies are more comfortable with their own sexual feelings (Ackard, Kearney-Cooke, & Peterson, 2000; Faith & Schare, 1993; Trapnell, Meston, & Gorzalka, 1997; Wiederman, 2000). For example, women who report more body dissatisfaction report a later onset of masturbation (Wiederman & Pryor, 1997) and are less likely to receive (but not less likely to perform) oral sex (Wiederman & Hurst, 1998). In addition, Schooler, Ward, Merriwether, and Caruthers (2005) found that greater levels of body discomfort and body self-consciousness each predicted lower levels of sexual assertiveness, sexual experience, and condom use self-efficacy, as well as higher levels of sexual risk-taking. When self-objectification was experimentally induced in one study, women reported decreased interest in the physical aspects of sex (T-A. Roberts & Gettman, 2004). These findings suggest that body shame may inhibit women's ability to advocate for, or even acknowledge, their own sexual feelings or pleasure.

Girls with disabilities may experience particular challenges in developing a healthy sexuality. Health care professionals have historically viewed individuals with disabilities as inanimate objects, communicating an unspoken message that they are not fully human (Leeds Metropolitan University, 2005). Especially for girls with disabilities, this view may negatively affect identity development and exacerbate the effects of cultural messages that reduce girls to sexual objects. Moreover, with instances of abuse estimated to be 33%–83% depending on the type of disability and the definition of abuse (Schaller & Lagergren Frieberg, 1998), girls and young women with disabilities struggle to develop a healthy concept of sexuality and of themselves.

Attitudes and Beliefs

A central concern raised in this report is that frequent exposure to media images that sexualize girls and women may affect how girls conceptualize femininity and sexuality, leading them to accept more constrained and stereotypical notions about gender roles and sexual roles (i.e., that women are sexual objects). Findings across several studies indicate that this appears to be the case. Girls and young women who more frequently consume or engage with mainstream media content also offer stronger endorsement of sexual stereotypes that paint women as sexual objects (L. M. Ward, 2002; L. M. Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999; Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006). For example, findings indicate that among undergraduate women, more frequent viewing of reality dating television programs was correlated with greater acceptance of a sexual double standard and the belief that dating is a game and that men and women are adversaries (Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006).

Similarly, among Black high school girls, stronger identification with one's favorite TV character and with more objectifying music artists was associated with greater support of stereotypes about women as sex objects (Gordon, 2004). Experimental work exploring connections between media use and girls' acceptance of sexual objectification yields similar results. For example, L. M. Ward (2002) reported that young women exposed to images from prime-time TV that depicted women as sexual objects offered stronger support of this notion than did women in control groups. Similarly, Johnson, Adams, Ashburn, and Reed (1995) reported that Black adolescent girls exposed to sexualized rap videos expressed greater acceptance of teen dating violence than those not exposed. It appears that exposure to mainstream (i.e., sexually objectifying) media

encourages girls to objectify women and to see other women as less than human.

Media exposure has been found to constrain young women's conceptions of femininity by putting appearance and physical attractiveness at the center of women's value. For example, Zurbriggen and Morgan (2006) reported that more frequent viewing of reality TV programming among young women was associated with a stronger belief in the importance of appearance. Indeed, when asked to rate the importance of particular qualities for women, White and Black high school students who consumed more mainstream media attributed greater importance to sexiness and beauty than did students who consumed less (L. M. Ward, 2004a; L. M. Ward, Hansbrough, & Walker, 2005). Similarly, Tan (1979) reported that girls who viewed beauty commercials subsequently rated physical attractiveness as more personally important and as a more important determinant of popularity than did girls who viewed neutral commercials. The sexualization and objectification of women in the media appear to teach girls that as women, all they have to offer is their body and face and that they should expend all their effort on physical appearance.

> *The sexualization and objectification of women in the media appear to teach girls that as women, all they have to offer is their body and face, and that they should expend all their effort on physical appearance.*

Effects of Sexual Exploitation on Girls

Childhood sexual abuse victimization is an extreme form of sexualization, one that always involves both sexual objectification and the inappropriate imposition of sexuality. Reviewing the sequelae of sexual abuse may, therefore, be relevant to understanding the effects of sexualization. It is important to remember, however, that sexual abuse may also involve or co-occur with violence or threats of violence, demands for secrecy, physical abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect. Thus, negative effects associated with sexual abuse victimization are unlikely to be due solely to sexualization. It is nevertheless useful to review these negative sequelae.

Childhood sexual abuse victimization is associated with a host of negative effects, both during childhood (Kendall-Tackett et al., 1993) and subsequently as an adult (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986). Childhood sexual abuse has been linked to increased rates of dissociation (Putnam & Trickett, 1997), depression (Briere & Conte, 1993; Briere & Runtz, 1988), anxiety (Briere & Runtz, 1987; Molnar, Buka, & Kessler, 2001), posttraumatic stress disorder (Rodriguez, Van de Kemp, & Foy, 1998), body shame (Andrews, 1995), eating disorders (Smolak & Murnen, 2002), physical health impairment (Leserman, 2005), and difficulty in interpersonal relationships (Colman & Widom, 2004). Negative effects are more pervasive when the abuse is frequent, severe, or of long duration, involves force, or is perpetrated by someone close to the victim (Banyard & Williams, 1996; Kendall-Tackett et al., 1993; Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans, & Herbison, 1993). The responses of others (Ullman, 2003) and girls' own perceptions and attributions (Haaken & Lamb, 2000; Hoagwood, 1990; Lamb, 1996, 1999) have also been shown to affect the likelihood and intensity of negative effects.

Of special interest is the relationship between childhood sexual abuse victimization and sexual behavior. A common symptom of sexually abused children is sexualized behavior (e.g., self-sexualization; Friedrich et al., 2001; Kendall-Tackett et al., 1993; Letourneau, Schoenwald, & Sheidow, 2004). The sexually abused child may incorporate the perpetrator's perspective into her identity, eventually viewing herself as good for nothing but sex (Herman, 1992; Putnam, 1990). The constricted sense of self of the sexually abused child and the coercive refusal of the perpetrator to respect the child's physical boundaries may result in subsequent difficulties in asserting boundaries, impaired self-protection, and a greater likelihood of being further victimized as an adult (Classen, Palesh, & Aggarwal, 2005), including becoming involved in prostitution (Nadon et al., 1998; Silbert & Pines, 1981, 1982). Childhood sexual abuse victimization is

also linked with risky sexual behavior as an adolescent and adult (Quina, Morokoff, Harlow, & Zurbriggen, 2004).

Impact on Others

In addition to the consequences for girls described previously, the sexualization of girls may also affect boys, men, and adult women. Evidence relevant to possible negative effects for these groups is described below.

Boys and Men

The sexualization of girls can have a negative impact on boys and men. Exposure to narrow ideals of female sexual attractiveness may make it difficult for some men to find an "acceptable" partner or to fully enjoy intimacy with a female partner (Schooler & Ward, 2006). Several experimental studies have shown that exposure to pornography (which often sexually objectifies women; Jensen & Dines, 2004) leads men to rate their female partners as less attractive (Weaver, Masland, & Zillmann, 1984), to indicate less satisfaction with their intimate partners' attractiveness, sexual performance, and level of affection (Zillmann & Bryant, 1988), and to express greater desire for sex without emotional involvement (Zillmann & Bryant, 1988).

Even viewing a single episode of an objectifying television program such as *Charlie's Angels* may lead men to rate real women as less physically attractive (Kenrick & Guttieres, 1980). Frable, Johnson, and Kellman (1997) found that undergraduate men who regularly viewed pornography spontaneously generated more sexual terms to describe the construct "women" than did those who viewed pornography less regularly. The two groups did not differ in their descriptions of the construct "men," suggesting that viewing pornography is associated specifically with sexualizing women and may not have a more generalized and gender-neutral effect.

Objectifying girls/women and sex itself is integral to masculinity beliefs (Connell, 1987; Kimmel, 1996; Tolman, 2002), but these beliefs may jeopardize men's ability to form and maintain intimate relationships with women (G. Brooks, 1995; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Pollack, 1998). Burn and Ward (2005) found that undergraduate men's satisfaction with their romantic relationship

was negatively correlated with most masculinity beliefs, including ones that are relevant to the objectification of women (i.e., dominance ["I should be in charge"], power over women ["In general, I control the women in my life"], and playboy ["If I could, I would frequently change sexual partners"]). Empathy may be important in understanding the relationship between objectification and relationship satisfaction. When one person objectifies another, it is difficult, perhaps even impossible, to treat that person with empathy (Herman, 1992), an important predictor of satisfaction and stability in intimate relationships (Davis & Oathout, 1987; Long & Andrews, 1990).

If girls and women are seen exclusively as sexual beings rather than as complicated people with many interests, talents, and identities, boys and men may have difficulty relating to them on any level other than the sexual. This could dramatically limit the opportunities boys and men have to interact intellectually with girls and women, to compete with and against them in sports or games, to create art or make music with them, to work together for higher causes (e.g., volunteer work or activism), or to enjoy their company as friends.

Women

A cultural milieu in which women and girls are sexualized harms adult women in all the ways that it harms girls (detailed previously). That is, there are negative repercussions for women's cognitive functioning, body satisfaction, mental and physical health, sexuality, and attitudes and beliefs. Self-sexualization and self-objectification by adult women, although perhaps less common in women as they age (T-A. Roberts, 2004), have the same causes and consequences as in girls and young women (Prichard & Tiggemann, 2005; Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001). There are additional consequences, however, for adult women in at least one domain that is less relevant for girls—the workplace.

Although a meta-analysis of experimental studies suggests that the employment-related benefits of physical attractiveness are as strong for women as they are for men (Hosoda, Stone-Romero, & Coats 2003), these studies have focused on attractiveness rather than on sexiness per se. In contrast, Glick, Larsen, Johnson, and Branstiter (2005)

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manipulated the sexiness of a female job applicant and held physical attractiveness constant. They found that when the sexy job applicant was applying for a managerial job, she was rated as less competent and less intelligent than the conservatively dressed job applicant; participants also indicated that they would experience fewer positive emotions and more negative emotions toward the sexy applicant (compared with the conservatively dressed applicant) if she were hired. None of these differences was found when the applicants were described as applying for a job as a receptionist. These data imply that self-sexualization or sexualization by others is likely to have a negative impact on women seeking professional careers.

A cultural milieu in which girls are sexualized may have additional consequences for adult women. The sexualization of girls contributes to the idealization of youth as the only good and beautiful stage of life. If one accepts fashion "super-models" as representing the culturally accepted standard of idealized female beauty, the ideal age appears to be about 17. Girls as young as 11 or 12 have achieved modeling success, and many of the most famous models became inter-nationally well known before they were 16 (Moore, 2003). Of the six champions on the popular television program *America's Next Top Model* (2006)(which requires contestants to be at least 18, presumably for legal reasons), the oldest champion was 23, and the average age of the champions was 20.2. Given this ideal, it is not surprising that as women age, they become increasingly invisible in the culture (Arber & Ginn, 1991; Cook & Kaiser, 2004; Wolf, 1991).

Many women respond to this cultural standard by making every effort to remain and look as youthful as possible. Sales of "anti-aging" beauty products increased by 10.7% in 2005 (to over $11 billion worldwide), showing the greatest increase in any category of skin-care product (O. Phillips, 2006). An analysis of plastic surgery rates (especially for procedures that lift and tuck aging body parts) provides further evidence that some aging women

> *Some aging women feel strong pressure to look younger. . . . Even with plastic surgery, it is impossible for an adult woman to maintain the look of a 17-year-old adolescent.*

feel strong pressure to look younger. Data from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons shows that common procedures designed to "freshen" the body and keep it looking young have been steadily increasing. Between 2000 and 2005, annual rates of Botox injections rose from roughly three quarters of a million to almost 4 million, amounting to a 388% increase. In the same 5-year period, there was also a 115% increase in tummy tucks (from 62,713 to 134,746 annually), a 283% increase in buttock lifts (from 1,356 to 5,193 annually), as well as a stunning 3,413% and 4,101% increase in upper arm and lower body lifts, respectively (American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2006c). Many of these procedures were age specific. Although younger and older women receive rhinoplasty and breast augmentations at relatively equal rates, the rates for women 35–50 years of age who receive breast lifts, but-tock lifts, tummy tucks, and liposuction are approximately double those of women 19–34 years of age (American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2006b).

Even with plastic surgery, it is impossible for an adult woman to main-tain the look of a 17-year-old adolescent. This inability to meet the culturally imposed standard of beauty may lead to body shame, lowered self-esteem, and a reduced sense of well-being. There is evidence that expo-sure to thin-ideal images in the media and subsequent thin-ideal internalization have negative effects on adult women. For example, across two studies, Dittmar and col-leagues (Dittmar & Howard, 2004; Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004) found that adult women (e.g., 20–60 years of age) exposed to ads featuring thin models expressed more body-focused anxiety than those exposed to average-sized or no models, and this was especially true for those who strongly internalized the thin ideal.

Exposure to a "White- ideal" in the media may be damaging to women of color who cannot match that ideal; research showing a negative correlation between music video exposure and self-esteem in African American ado-lescents (L. M. Ward, 2004b) supports this supposition. It is,

therefore, reasonable to hypothesize that exposure to a "young ideal" in the media will be similarly damaging to "older" (i.e., not teenage) women of all ethnicities.

The perpetuation of an extremely narrow range of desirable ages may also have repercussions for women's ability to succeed and advance in the workplace. If women strive to appear as youthful as possible in order to more closely match the ideal of female beauty, their competence and skills may be questioned because of their youthful appearance. This double bind was apparent in the data of C. Duncan and Loretto (2004). In their study, both women and men reported experiencing age discrimination for being too young, but women were more likely than men to report that this discrimination was specifically related to their youthful appearance (as opposed to other characteristics associated with youth, such as experience).

Moreover, women but not men recounted experiences of sexualized ageism (e.g., a 35-year-old woman reported being referred to as "a dried up old maid"). More evidence for the double bind was found in data from men and women in their 30s. Among this group, 25 of the 27 men who reported age discrimination stated that it was because of their youth; only 2 stated that it was because they were too old. But of the 25 women in this demographic, 13 reported age discrimination because they were too young and 12 because they were too old.

Impact on Society

In addition to the serious consequences for girls that have been outlined previously, the sexualization of girls is likely to have numerous negative consequences for society and its other members, including boys, men, and women, which will impact girls indirectly. Cultural institutions such as schools and workplaces may be affected. More important, general social attitudes and expectations about sexuality and gender may change in problematic ways as a result of media objectification and sexualization. Pressing social problems that disproportionately affect girls both directly and indirectly, including violence against girls and women, sexual exploitation of girls, forms of pornography, and prostitution of girls, may be maintained or even increased if there is a continued and escalating sexualization of

girls. Some of these consequences are explored in the following sections.

Sexism
The sexualization of girls and women may contribute to broader societal consequences, such as sexism, sex bias, and sexist attitudes. Evidence in support of this assertion comes from several types of studies. One group of studies tests whether exposure to sexualized or sexually objectifying content shapes viewers' attitudes toward women in general. A second group of studies uses experimental means to investigate whether exposure to such content affects people's perceptions of real women. A third group tests whether experimental exposure to this content affects people's actions toward real women. Although these exposure studies focus on content that sexualizes adult women, the resulting consequences are noted for viewers of all ages, including adolescent boys and girls as well as young women and men. We hypothesize that exposure to sexualized girls likely leads to sexist attitudes about girls and women as well.

Among the first set of studies that test links between exposure to objectifying content and the development of sexist attitudes, findings indicate that frequent, regular exposure to genres high in sexualized imagery (such as music videos) and deeper levels of media involvement are both associated with greater acceptance by men and women of attitudes that sexualize and sexually objectify women (e.g., Strouse, Goodwin, & Roscoe, 1994; L. M. Ward, 2002; L. M. Ward & Friedman, 2006; L. M. Ward et al., 2005). For example, L. M. Ward, Merriwether, and Caruthers (2006a) discovered that undergraduate men who were frequent readers of men's magazines such as *Maxim* and *Sports Illustrated,* who attributed greater realism to media portrayals, and who watched TV more intently to learn about the world were also more accepting of traditional masculinity ideologies, including the sexual objectification of women.

These correlational findings are strengthened by outcomes from experimental work that reach the same conclusion. Across several studies, women and men exposed to sexually objectifying images of women from mainstream

media (e.g., R-rated films, magazine advertisements, music videos) were found to be significantly more accepting of rape myths (e.g., the belief that women invite rape by engaging in certain behaviors), sexual harassment, sex role stereotypes, interpersonal violence, and adversarial sexual beliefs about relationships than were those in control conditions (e.g., Kalof, 1999; Milburn, Mather, & Conrad, 2000; L. M. Ward, 2002). For example, White undergraduates exposed to a sexually objectifying music video were more likely to endorse adversarial sexual beliefs than were students exposed to a nonsexual music video (Kalof, 1999). Exposure to sexist magazine ads featuring women as sexual objects produced a stronger acceptance of sex role stereotyping and of rape myths among male undergraduates (Lanis & Covell, 1995; MacKay & Covell, 1997). Additionally, high school students exposed to content featuring women as sexual objects drawn either from music videos (L. M. Ward et al., 2005) or prime-time television programs (L. M. Ward & Friedman, 2006) expressed more support of these attitudes than did students who did not receive this exposure.

Exposure to sexist magazine ads featuring women as sexual objects produced a stronger acceptance of sex role stereotyping and of rape myths among male undergraduates.

A second line of research demonstrates that experimental exposure to sexualized or sexually objectifying images of women affects people's perceptions or judgments of other women. The findings here are few, yet provocative. Hansen and Hansen (1988) reported that undergraduate students who had watched three neutral music videos later perceived a man's "hitting on" a female colleague to be akin to sexual harassment, yet students who had viewed sexist music videos perceived his sexual advances to be appropriate and thought less favorably of the woman if she rejected him. Gan, Zillmann, and Mitrook (1997) examined how exposure to sexualized images of Black women in R&B music videos affects White students' perceptions of neutral Black and White women. They reported that whereas video exposure was inconsequential for judgments of White women, the Black

women encountered later were judged least good, most bad, and furthest from the "ideal." It appears that exposure to sexually enticing rap videos fostered perceptions of diminished positive traits and stronger negative traits in Black women in general.

Finally, exposure to sexualized content has been shown to affect how women actually behave and how men treat and respond to real women in subsequent interactions. These studies have generally found that after men are exposed to sexualized content, their behavior toward women is more sexualized, and they treat women like sexual objects. For example, undergraduate men exposed to 16 sexist and objectifying commercials later asked more sexist questions of a female confederate posing as a job applicant, recalled more about her appearance and less about her personal background, and rated her as friendlier, more suitable to hire, but less competent than did controls (L. Rudman & Borgida, 1995). Similarly, McKenzie-Mohr and Zanna (1990) found that after exposure to a 15-minute pornography tape, stereotypically masculine men were perceived by a female experimenter to be more sexually motivated, they positioned themselves closer to her, and they recalled more information about her physical appearance than did men in other conditions.

Using a similar paradigm, Jansma, Linz, Mulac, and Imrich (1997) reported a pattern in which gender-typed men appeared to rate a female partner lower on intellectual competence after viewing a sexually explicit film and higher after viewing a nonsexual film. Non-gender-typed men appeared to respond in the reverse. Overall, it is argued that exposure to sexualized depictions of women may lead to global thoughts that "women are seductive and frivolous sex objects" (Lavine, Sweeney, & Wagner, 1999) and "foster an overall climate that does not value girls' and women's voices or contributions to society" (Merskin, 2004).

Girls' Educational Success and Achievement

Aspirations. If, as the self-objectification literature suggests, girls' preoccupation with appearance ties up cognitive resources, girls will have less time and mental energy for other pursuits. Girls may be learning to prioritize certain rewards (male attention) over other rewards (academic accomplishment), thus limiting their future educational and occupational opportunities. If they perceive occupations relating to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) as less consistent with a sexy self-image, they may be induced to want to be a model, fashion designer, or pop star in order to embody the sexualized look that they know is valued for women rather than choose to be a chemist, computer programmer, or engineer. If girls perceive what research shows—that women who choose male-identified professions are least preferred (in college samples) as romantic partners (Yoder & Schleicher, 1996)—then they will perceive some social costs to choosing careers that are not consistent with a "sexy" image. On the other hand, if girls continue along a nonfeminine career path, presenting a sexy image will also be costly and may result in being perceived as less competent (Glick et al., 2005).

Two studies exploring stereotype threat exposed college-aged women to highly feminine-stereotyped television commercials, which emphasized a young woman's sexual attractiveness and physical beauty (Davies, Spencer, Quinn, & Gerhardstein, 2002; Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005). After exposure to the sexy/pretty ads, compared with the gender-neutral or counterstereotypic ads, women indicated less interest in vocational options that emphasize quantitative reasoning (e.g., math and science) and also endorsed lower leadership aspirations, suggesting that sexualization may indeed "prime" lower achievement orientation among young women.

Earlier research has shown different vocational aspirations for adolescent boys and girls (e.g., Corder & Stephan, 1984; Gottfredson, 1981; Grotevant & Thorbecke, 1982)

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and differential aspirations (e.g., Kerr, 1983, 1985) and achievement (favoring boys) for gifted girls and gifted boys (e.g., Eccles, 1985; Hollinger & Fleming, 1992). Although girls today have higher educational and occupational aspirations than they have had in the past, we do not know to what extent preoccupation with looks or even sexualization interferes with these aspirations. Given limited research suggesting that self-objectification practices may limit cognitive resources, exploring further whether sexualization exposure and experiences are responsible for a kind of "brain drain" among young girls and women is an important priority for future research.

Sexual harassment in school. Despite the fact that many girls believe that a sexy appearance brings them power, quite the opposite may be true. Although sexy dress does not justify sexual harassment nor has it been shown to provoke sexual harassment in school studies, the belief that girls are sexual objects may be related to boys' tendency to sexually harass girls in school and in this way could affect girls adversely. Sexual harassment by boys and men is a regular part of school and work life. Peers perpetrate 79% of the sexual harassment in schools (American Association of University Women, 2001), and much of this harassment is in the form of sexual jokes, leering, touching or grabbing areas like the breasts or buttocks, and comments on physical appearance (e.g., J. Duffy, Wareham, & Walsh, 2004). The consequences of sexual harassment are far-reaching, can be long lasting (J. Duffy et al., 2004), and move beyond psychological effects on girls to educational consequences (Houston & Hwang, 1996; Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2000), costs to schools, and consequences to society in general. One study of the estimated economic cost of sexual harassment in the U.S. Army, for example, found that in one year alone, the cost of sexual harassment was over $250 billion (Faley, Knapp, Kustis, & Dubois, 1999).

Several studies suggest that the sexualization of girls contributes to sexual harassment and coercion. In a survey

of university faculty, staff, and students, O'Hare and O'Donohue (1998) found that respondents who reported that their male coworkers held sexist attitudes reported more experiences of gender harassment, sexual harassment, and sexual coercion. Quinn's (2002) qualitative study of adult men's accounts of "girl-watching" in the workplace highlighted the role that objectification and (low) empathy with the targeted women played in this type of sexual harassment. Angelone, Hirschman, Suniga, Armey, and Armelie (2005) found that college men who were exposed to a sexist confederate (one who made objectifying comments about a female actress and denigrating comments about women on campus) told more sexual jokes to a female confederate than did men exposed to a nonsexist confederate. Taken together, these studies suggest that boys exposed to sexualization portrayals of girls may be more likely to commit sexual harassment.

Some studies of the effects of school uniforms on students' perceptions also lend indirect support for the notion that sexualizing clothing may be a factor in harassment of girls. When students dress in uniforms, fellow students as well as teachers rate them as higher in academic ability and positive school-related behavior than students in standard dress (Behling, 1994). Furthermore, one study showed that girls who wear uniforms report more positive perceptions of safety and peer relationships in school than girls in regular clothes (Fosseen, 2002). It is important to underscore that girls do not "cause" harassment or abusive behavior by wearing sexy clothes; no matter what girls wear, they have the right to be free of sexual harassment, and boys and men can and should control their behavior. But when sexualized clothing is part of a larger cultural context in which girls are sexually objectified, standardized uniforms may help to change those cultural messages and understandings of who girls are and what they are capable of, thereby reducing the incidence of sexual harassment in general.

Violence and Exploitation

Violence against girls. Numerous studies have shown a connection between stereotypical attitudes about women's sexuality and aggressive sexual behavior. For example,

adversarial sexual beliefs, rape myth acceptance, and sexist beliefs about women are related to aggressive sexual behaviors (Dean & Malamuth, 1997; Murnen, Wright, & Kaluzny, 2002; Osland, Fitch, & Willis, 1996; Spence, Losoff, & Robbins, 1991; Truman, Tokar, & Fischer, 1996; Vogel, 2000).

Other studies have connected media exposure to sexist beliefs and acceptance of violence against women. Several studies have shown that women and men exposed to sexually objectifying images of women from mainstream media (e.g., R-rated films, magazine advertisements, music videos) were found to be significantly more accepting of rape myths, sexual harassment, sex role stereotypes, interpersonal violence, and adversarial sexual beliefs about relationships than were those in control conditions (Kalof, 1999; Lanis & Covell, 1995; MacKay & Covell, 1997; Milburn et al., 2000; L. M. Ward, 2002; L. M. Ward et al., 2005). In one of the few studies using children rather than college-aged men and women as participants, Strouse et al. (1994) found that for boys and girls who were 11–16 years of age, frequent TV viewing and greater exposure to R- and X-rated films were each related to stronger acceptance of sexual harassment. Given that viewing sexualized and objectifying portrayals of women is associated with many of these attitudes, viewing sexualized portrayals of girls may also lead to these same effects and to a greater acceptance of child sexual abuse myths, child sexual abuse, and viewing younger and younger girls as acceptable sexual partners.

Sexual exploitation. There is little or no research on the effects on adults of viewing sexualized images of girls or even sexualized images of adult women made up to look like girls (a common practice in magazine advertisements). Several scholars (e.g., Merskin, 2004; O'Donohue et al., 1997) have noted the urgent need for such research. But there may be negative effects at a societal level in addition to possible negative effects to individual viewers; these include providing justification and a market for child pornography and the prostitution and sexual trafficking of children. Because the consequences of child sexual abuse and child prostitution are so great, it is important to consider the possible connections carefully. Although there is

some disagreement in the literature on the relationship between pornography and sexual aggression, the most rigorous reviews (e.g., Allen, D'Alessio, & Brezgel, 1995; Allen, D'Alessio, & Emmers-Sommer, 2000; Allen, Emmers, Gebhardt, & Giery, 1995; Malamuth, Addison, & Koss, 2000) have concluded that there are reliable associations between viewing pornography and committing sexually aggressive acts. These associations are strongest when considering violent pornography and/or men who possess other risk factors for sexual aggression.

When specifically considering child pornography, however, almost no experimental research has been conducted. One exception is a study by B. Paul (2004) designed to assess the effects of viewing child pornography. Paul used "barely legal" pornography as the stimuli in an experiment. In "barely legal" pornography, adult women are made to look like children. Thus, while the pornography is legal (the models are above the age of 18), the viewer perceives a sexualized child. The findings were that viewing such pornography led to a stronger mental association between neutral (nonsexual) images of children and words related to sex (e.g., *arousing, sexy*). These findings suggest that viewing sexualized portrayals of girls could lead viewers to associate children with sex, even when they are not being sexualized.

One particularly pernicious effect of the constant exposure to sexualized images of girls is that individuals and society may be "trained" to perceive and label sexualized girls as "seductive." Studies have shown that adult men often misperceive friendliness in adult women as sexual interest (Abbey, 1982, 1987). Images of young girls who are made to look like adult women may evoke similar responses.

Another area of slippage concerns consent. Children are not legally able to give consent to sexual activity with an adult. When girls are dressed to resemble adult women, however, adults may project adult motives as well as an adult level of responsibility and agency on girls. Images of precocious sexuality in girls may serve to normalize abusive practices such as child abuse, child prostitution, and the sexual trafficking of children.

Finally, the sexualization of girls may also contribute to the trafficking and prostitution of girls by helping to create a market for sex with children through the cultivation of new desires and experiences. If the idealized female sexual partner is a 15- or 16-year-old girl, male consumers may demand pornography featuring such girls and the opportunity to pay for sex with them. A 2005 report noted a disturbing new trend in the recruitment of children into pornography: Pedophiles and "johns" look in online chat rooms for teens with Web cameras linked to their computers and then seduce them into performing sex acts for money in front of the camera (Eichenwald, 2005).

Summary of Consequences of the Sexualization of Girls

The research summarized in this section offers evidence of negative consequences for girls when they are sexualized or exposed to sexualized images and when others are exposed to such images. First, there is evidence that girls exposed to sexualizing and objectifying media are more likely to experience body dissatisfaction, depression, and lower self-esteem; research to date suggests that these effects are not as pronounced for African American girls. There is no research to date on lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered youths. Self-objectification has been shown to diminish cognitive ability and to cause shame. This cognitive diminishment, as well as the belief that physical appearance rather than academic or extracurricular achievement is the best path to power and acceptance, may influence girls' achievement levels and opportunities later in life.

Girls' sexual development may also be affected as they are exposed to models of passivity, and studies indicate that the media may influence a girl's perceptions of her own virginity or first sexual experience. Interpersonally, girls' relationships with other girls are affected, as such relationships can become policing grounds where girls support or reject other girls for reasons having to do with conformity to a narrow beauty ideal that involves a sexualized presentation or competition for boys' attention. Girls' relationships with boys and men are affected in that exposure to sexualizing and objectifying media has been shown to relate to girls' and boys' views on dating, boys' sexual harassment of girls, and attitudes toward sexual violence.

Positive Alternatives and Approaches to Counteracting the Influence of Sexualization

The research presented in the initial portion of this report focused on concerns that girls are sexualized by the current culture, by other people, and by themselves and that this sexualization is likely to lead to a host of negative effects. Despite the concerns raised throughout this report, however, there are several indications that negative outcomes are neither inevitable nor universal. Some girls and their supporters, now and in the past, have resisted mainstream characterizations of girls as sexual objects. Through media education and literacy, the creation of media subcultures, participation in athletics, comprehensive sex education programs, activism, and religious/spiritual practices, girls, their peers, adults in their lives, and institutions that support them help to challenge the narrow prescriptions for girls in this culture.

The following sections describe existing programs and practices that counter sexualization and note others that, if implemented, have the potential to do so. We look, in turn, at approaches implemented through the schools, through families, and by girls themselves.

Approach 1: Working Through Schools and Formal Education

Schools can contribute in several ways to greater awareness of the sexualization of girls in the media and can help girls and their peers resist these negative influences.

Media Literacy

Because the media are important sources of sexualizing images, the development and implementation of school-based media literacy training programs could be key in combating the influence of sexualization. There is an urgent need for girls to view media critically. Although components vary from program to program, media literacy training in general provides media consumers with analytical tools that promote autonomy and critical understanding of media. The goal is to create active interpreters of messages rather than passive consumers. Training encourages media consumers to notice the messages inherent in media, to think about who is sending those messages and why, and to challenge their realism (Potter, 2004). Several nonprofit organizations, some that have girls serving on their boards, have designed media literacy programs. These programs aim not only to educate girls who consume media but also to raise awareness of how girls and women are represented and to advocate for improvement by providing resources to media producers, teachers, and parents. The Girls, Women + Media Project (www.mediaandwomen.org) is one such organization (see the Appendix for a list of others).

Research on the effectiveness of media literacy programs has not yet focused on the sexualization of girls and women, but it has examined the related topic of body image. One study of college women found that three media literacy programs were effective in increasing women's skepticism about the realism of images that promote a thin ideal of beauty, compared with a control group receiving no intervention (Irving & Berel, 2001).

Another study found that high school girls who participated in a media literacy program had less internalization of the thin ideal and more questions about the realism of images than girls in a control group (Irving, DuPen, & Berel, 1998). Yamamiya, Cash, Melnyk, Posavac, and Posavac (2005) found that participation in a media literacy education program prior to exposure to stereotypical images prevented adverse effects. Studies indicate that media literacy programs addressing alcohol use (e.g., Austin & Johnson, 1997) and television violence (e.g., Voojis & Van der Voort, 1993) have also been effective. Programs directly targeting the sexualization of girls and women may benefit the school-aged girls who consume sexualized media, as well as their male peers who are also exposed to these media images and who may treat girls differently as a result.

Athletics

Another school-based strategy is to provide access to athletics and other extracurricular activities that encourage girls to focus on body competence instead of body

appearance. Although girls' and women's participation in sports and physical activity can be dismissed, ignored, sexualized, or co-opted, participation in physical activity may be one of girls' best means of resisting objectification and sexualization. Because athletic activities inherently require a focus on body competence, agency, and action, they provide girls with the opportunity to develop a self-concept founded on what they can do rather than on how they look. Children's and adolescents' participation in sports and physical activities is related to increased self-esteem (Abernathy, Webster, & Vermeulen, 2002; Bonhauser et al., 2005; Crews, Lochbaum, & Landers, 2004; McAuley, 1994), and this association may be especially strong among children with economic disadvantages or those who have mental, emotional, or physical disabilities (Gruber, 1986). Sports participation is also linked to increased levels of body self-esteem (Bissell, 2004; DiBartolo & Shaffer, 2002).

That these increases in self-esteem relate to healthier sexual development is suggested by evidence that sports participation is inversely related to engaging in risky sexual behavior (Lehman & Keorner, 2004; Miller, Barnes, Melnick, Sabo, & Farrell, 2002). The effects found by Lehman and Koehler were mediated by increased empowerment/self-efficacy and functional body orientation. Functional body orientation refers to the extent to which one thinks of one's own body in terms of the things it can do and is capable of performing. Tracy and Erkut (2002) have shown that an additional pathway to less risky sexual behavior via sports participation is through the decreased feminine gender role orientation of girl participants.

Because physical activity may be a powerful means of negating self-objectification and other negative consequences of sexualization, the sexualization of women and girl athletes may be especially dangerous or harmful for girls. If this domain becomes co-opted and turned into yet another venue where girls are taught to focus on how they look rather than on what their bodies can do, they will have been deprived of an important method of resistance and healthy development.

Extracurricular Activities
Some studies of adolescent risk behavior (e.g., early sexual activity and substance use) suggest that extracurricular participation and the development of a talent may be protective factors for these outcomes (Savage & Holcomb, 1998; Shilts, 1991). No studies to date, however, have examined extracurricular activities in relation to objectification of girls' bodies or sexualization practices. It may be that participation in certain extracurricular activities, in addition to or instead of sports, protects girls against the negative effects of sexualization and objectification of girls and women in the media, particularly when the activity does not support feminine gender role ideals. It will thus be important for future researchers attempting to understand the effects of extracurricular activity on youth to differentiate those extracurricular activities that lend themselves to a narrow body image standard with an emphasis on sexiness, attractiveness, or thinness (e.g., some forms of dance) from those that require talents that are different (e.g. drama club, marching band, African drumming, dance forms such as hip-hop and modern). Schools that provide a variety of extracurricular activities, including activities that have generally been associated with boys' interests (e.g., computer and video gaming), are giving girls alternatives to activities that emphasize beauty, thinness, and sex appeal.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education
A central way to help youth counteract distorted views presented by the media and culture about girls, sex, and the sexualization of girls is through comprehensive sexuality education. Although guidelines for comprehensive sexuality education vary, all include the presentation of accurate, evidence-based information about reproduction and contraception, the importance of delaying intercourse initiation for young people, and the building of communication skills. Most relevant to combating sexualization, many also address media, peer, and cultural influences on sexual behaviors and decisions (SIECUS, 2004) and promote a notion of sexual responsibility that includes respect for oneself and an emphasis on consensual, nonexploitative sexual activity (Office of Population Affairs, 1999).

This kind of sex education may reverse the negative effects of the sexualization of girls. It is also likely to have other positive effects and unlikely to have adverse consequences. Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher's (2001) report on sexual health and responsible sexual behavior indicates that the most effective sex education for preventing teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections is comprehensive. Research indicates that comprehensive programs do not increase the frequency of sex or the number of sex partners, nor do such programs lower the age of first intercourse (Kirby, 2001).

Approach 2: Working Through the Family

Parents and other family members can help girls interpret sexualizing cultural messages in ways that mitigate or prevent harm. Because sexualization is often so pervasive as to seem normal and thus not even discernible to many girls, parents can make sexualization visible by discussing media and other cultural messages with girls. Religious practices and social or political activism are also helpful strategies.

> *Parents and other family members can help girls interpret sexualizing cultural messages in ways that mitigate or prevent harm.*

Mediation and Co-Viewing
Traditionally, suggestions on how to combat potential negative effects of media use, such as aggression and stereotyping, have centered on the roles of parental mediation and co-viewing. Here, the notion is that having parents comment on appropriate and inappropriate content while watching TV with their children can alter the influence of the messages. Although media literacy and co-viewing were initially discussed and tested in the 1970s and early 1980s, renewed attention has been given to this approach in recent years. Findings from several experimental studies demonstrate the benefits of such interventions in promoting parent–child interactions involving media.

In one study, grade school children viewed four TV clips portraying stereotypical gender roles (Nathanson, Wilson, McGee, & Sebastian, 2002). For children in one condition, the experimenter inserted comments contradicting the stereotypical behavior. In another condition, she did not. Results indicated that children in the mediation condition evaluated the program less positively and expressed greater acceptance of nontraditional gender roles for men than did children who received no mediation. Similar results have been obtained in experimental work testing children's responses to media violence (Nathanson, 2004).

A 2003 field study also suggested that parents can influence the way children interpret sexual content on television. R. L. Collins, Elliott, Berry, Kanouse, and Hunter (2003) interviewed a national sample of adolescents (ages 12–17 years) shortly after the airing of an episode of the sitcom *Friends*. The episode centered on discussion of a condom failure that had resulted in the pregnancy of one of the show's main characters. One in four teen viewers saw condoms as less effective in preventing pregnancy than they had in a survey 6 months earlier. Viewers who reported talking with an adult about the program, however, actually viewed condoms as more effective than they had previously. These studies hold promise that girls' co-viewing and active discussions with parents may decrease the influence of viewing sexualized images.

Religion, Spirituality, and Meditation
Organized religious and other ethical instruction often begins within the family and can offer girls important practical and psychological alternatives to the values conveyed by popular culture. When parents, through their religious or ethical practices, communicate the message that other characteristics are more important than sexuality, they help to counteract the strong and prevalent message that it is only girls' sexuality that makes them interesting, desirable, or valuable. By insisting that girls be allowed to remain girls and not be pushed into a precocious sexuality, they provide a haven where girls can develop at their own

pace. In addition, although some religious institutions resist comprehensive sex education classes, others are open to such programs (Coyne-Beasley & Schoenbach, 2000) and may even be actively involved in designing them (e.g., the Our Whole Lives workshops by the Unitarian Universalist Church) (Casparian, 2000; Goldfarb, 2000; Sprung, 1999; Wilson, 1999).

Religion may also counteract the effects of media representations. L. M. Ward (2004b) found that religiosity buffered the effects of increased media use on self-esteem among Black adolescents. Negative effects of increased media use on self-esteem were seen only for those low in religiosity. She noted, however, that religiosity might be a proxy variable for involvement in the Black community, with social networks being the true buffering factor.

In addition to organized religion, a more diffuse sense of spirituality, or a self-directed spiritual practice, can also be a force for resistance. Just as many African American women recount using prayer and spirituality to cope with racism and sexism (Shorter-Gooden, 2004) or recover from childhood sexual violence (Bryant-Davis, 2005), so girls of all ethnicities may rely on spirituality to protect them from some of the effects of objectification and sexualization.

Finally, meditative practices common in many spiritual traditions and mindful body-centered practices such as yoga, tai chi, or qigong have been shown to have mental and physical health benefits, including increased self-understanding, self-acceptance, and well-being (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). Moreover, these practices typically facilitate the attainment of a mental state of calm, centered aware-ness that may be incompatible with self-objectification. Although many types of meditation involve a detached observation of the self (e.g., of one's breath or body movements), such self-observation has an introspective quality. This is in marked contrast to self-objectification, which develops from continually imagining how one looks or appears to an outside observer.

This reasoning finds support in the results of a recent study comparing yoga practitioners, aerobics practitioners, and a nonexercise group (Daubenmier, 2005). In addition to exhibiting greater body awareness and body satisfaction than the two comparison groups, the yoga practitioners also scored lower on self-objectification. This suggests that if girls regularly engage in meditation or other mindful practices, they might be protected against self-sexualization.

Activism by Parents and Families

Action by parents and families can have an impact in confronting sources of sexualized images of girls. In response to a May 2006 grassroots letter-writing campaign initiated by the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (www.commercialexploitation.org/) and Dads and Daughters (www.dadsanddaughters.org/), Hasbro cancelled a planned line of dolls based on the Pussycat Dolls, a music group known for their sexualized lyrics and dance routines (Goldiner, 2006). A dozen years earlier, a letter-writing campaign by one woman convinced Hyundai not to advertise in *Sports Illustrated*'s annual swimsuit edition (Horovitz, 1993). It is hoped that focused, sustained pressure on corporate sources of sexualization will lead to other such successes.

Approach 3: Working Directly With Girls and Girls' Groups to Resist

Alternative Media

Another approach to minimizing the impact and existence of sexualization is to encourage girls to become activists who speak out and develop their own alternatives. Prominent examples of this approach include "zines" (homemade magazines distributed in print form or on the Web), blogs (Web logs written by individuals), and feminist magazines, books, and Web sites. One of the most attractive features of these alternatives is that they provide a forum to teach girls to critically examine the sexualizing images presented by society and corporations.

Several studies have examined how bodies are discussed in zines. Ogle and Thornburg (2003) conducted a content analysis of body-related content in the zine *Girl Zone* (www.girlzone.com/), which is not created by girls but is nevertheless widely read by them. They identified three themes: girls' concerns about and experiences with their changing bodies (i.e., the pubertal process), the deconstruc-tion and critique of body-related images in mainstream

media and society, and discussion of strategies to cope with body-related societal pressures. Schilt (2003) analyzed 33 girl-made zines to understand how girls used this vehicle to explore, construct, and experience their lives. She argued that zines offer an antidote to consumer-based empowerment strategies (e.g., buying a T-shirt with a "girl power" slogan) that do not encourage girls to express their own ideas and opinions. When girls create a zine rather than buy a commercially available product, they become cultural producers rather than consumers, an experience that enables them to be more effective cultural critics.

Web pages (including Web logs or "blogs"), reflecting a vast range of topics and perspectives, are a fast-growing form of communication among adult and teen computer users. For girls, Web pages, whether created by adults or teens, can provide alternatives to what girls see in mainstream media as well as strategies for resistance, including recognition of sexualizing and objectifying cultural processes, along with language and support for describing related feelings (e.g., shame, anger). The Appendix provides a list of Web sites that offer articulate critiques of the media. Some of these are specific to particular groups of girls (e.g., girls of specific racial or ethnic backgrounds) and document the particular forms of objectification and sexualization to which these specific groups of girls are subjected. For example, *Bamboo Girl* (www.bamboogirl.com) is described by a girl-positive site (see www.thoughtworm.com) as a "zine that challenges the issues of racism/sexism/homophobia from the point of view of smart, loud non-traditional girls of color" (Thoughtworm, 2006). *Bamboo Girl* includes stories by Filipina/Asian/Pacific Islander girls, "because life isn't only Black & White" and "there's more to life than straight white male patriarchy" (*Bamboo Girl,* 2006).

Still, all Web sites about girls are not equal. Web sites with names that suggest that they are girl-friendly/girl-supportive can also be places where aspects of sexualization and objectification are reinscribed through advertising or

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content. The Web has enormous potential to encourage girls to critique the culture, explore cultural messages, and develop agency. But the Web as a form of media must also be approached with a critical eye.

A third form of alternative media is magazines, books, and films created by feminists and feminist organizations. In recent years, there have been more magazines published for girls, young women, and people of all ages that advocate for girls and identify and provide strong critiques of sexualization, objectification, and the economic and societal engines that fuel these practices. Some of these are cowritten with girls rather than written just about them. The goal in producing these magazines is to develop critiques and alternative ways for girls to relate to and celebrate their own and other female bodies, as well as to underscore that they are more than the sexualized objects that are projected in most media. *Teen Voices,* run by the nonprofit Women Express, is one such resource, and *New Moon Magazine* is another.

Books such as *Adios, Barbie: Young Women Write About Body and Identity* (Edut, 1998) and *Body Outlaws: Rewriting the Rules of Beauty* (Edut, 2003) provide girls with information and alternative perspectives on their bodies and offer insights into how others have struggled with and overcome specific forms of sexualization and objectification. Independent films are also available that explore sexualization and objectification in the mainstream media (e.g., *Dreamworlds, Killing Us Softly, Killing Us Softly 2* and *3,* and *The Strength to Resist*) and in other contexts such as schooling, poverty, and pregnancy (e.g., *Desire, Four Girls*).

Activism and Resistance

Girls can and do work together in groups, publicly and visibly, to protest sexualization and to develop critical perspectives on how girls and women are sexualized. Several political and activist (feminist) movements and groups support young women as they express their feelings on these issues, develop critical perspectives, and participate

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in activities in the public sphere that lead to social change. Many of these movements are local (e.g., Hardy Girls Healthy Women and Mainely Girls in Maine), and some operate under the leadership of older girls and young women (e.g., the Center for Young Women's Development in San Francisco).

In addition to their work with local girls, many programs also make available (primarily through Web sites) descriptions of activities that other groups could implement (e.g., writing and staging plays, holding fairs, and developing innovative formats for girls and women to work together to implement specific social and political changes). The goals of these programs are typically to oppose objectification and sexualization, as well as to help girls identify and strengthen those characteristics that will result in less personal objectification and sexualization.

One recent example of activism is the work of a group of 13- to 16-year-old girls who protested Abercrombie and Fitch (A&F) T-shirts printed with objectifying slogans such as, "Who needs a brain when you have these?" Working with the Women and Girls Foundation of Southwestern Pennsylvania, these girls began a "girlcott" of A&F that attracted national news attention; A&F eventually pulled these T-shirts from stores ("Racy T-Shirt Messages Drawing Girls' Backlash," 2005). Youth With Vision, a teen group in Kansas City, MI, conducted a study of slogans printed on T-shirts being sold in local stores (Uhlenhuth, 2006). They held a press conference to feature their "Wall of Shame"— examples of T-shirts that were demeaning and characterized girls as sluts and as bad—and a much smaller "Wall of Fame," which showed the few examples of positive speech they had identified in their research. They were featured on the *Today Show* (May 11, 2006), where they talked about their activism and their desire for stores to provide better options.

Several research studies have explored how girls of color are particularly effective in resisting mainstream notions of female sexuality, femininity, and beauty. Central to much of this research are feminist theories developed by and for women of color. For instance, Hill Collins (2000; see also Spillers, 1992) observed the significance of an oral

tradition among Black women that allows women to be "bawdy, rowdy, and irreverent" and thus anchor resistance to oppressions including objectification and resistance. J. Ward (2002) researched the tradition of African American parents actively socializing their children to identify and resist racism. One strategy that J. Ward documented involves Black parents teaching children and teens to recognize the culture in which they live as being White culture and to critique it accordingly.

Black women often reject Eurocentric ideals of beauty as culturally irrelevant and often feel better about their bodies than do White women (Duke, 2000; Milkie, 1999; Nichter, 2000). A study of nine 7th-grade Latinas revealed that although teachers perceived Puerto Rican girls in sexualized ways (e.g., as "hypersexual") and as uninterested in education, the girls often resisted these labels and stereotypes (Rolón-Dow, 2004). For example, the girls resisted the notion that liking boys or dressing sexy was incompatible with being a good student. They did not tolerate sexual harassment, reporting it to school officials or resorting to punching boys themselves when it occurred. Similarly, Faulkner (2003) interviewed 30 Latina teens and women (18–36 years of age) and found that many rejected cultural imperatives for motherhood and virginity, were angry at sexism, the lack of sexuality information, and being labeled, and insisted on their right to be both religious and sexually active.

Girl empowerment groups. There is a growing trend, both nationally and locally, of what are called "girl empowerment groups." These groups are dedicated to supporting girls in a variety of ways: helping them to know what they want; teaching them how to make social changes, especially in their communities; building their leadership skills; and arranging for connections between girls and women mentors. Girl empowerment groups, such as GENaustin, Girls' Empowerment Network, and Girlsforachange, can be found throughout the country. Several groups focus explicitly on how girls relate to physical competence and health. For example, GirlSports, a program of the Girl Scouts of America, allows girls access to and experience with an array of physical activities. The

expressed goals of the program include teaching girls to have fun playing sports; raising girls' self-esteem and sense of competence and achievement; and encouraging girls to embrace physical fitness as a life-long practice.

Opinions about what is necessary to empower girls can vary among the organizations and the individuals leading them. Some groups include programming or activities to encourage the development of girls' critical thinking about the treatment of girls and women, including objectification and sexualization, but many groups have not incorporated this, choosing instead to focus on other dimensions (e.g., mentoring or the development of entrepreneurial skills).

In addition, to work effectively with girls, the adult women leading these groups need to have confronted their own experience of sexualization, as well as other forms of oppression they have experienced (Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995). One counselor wrote that empowerment groups for African American girls must be led by African American women in order to help girls work through their legacy of struggle with multiple oppressions (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005).

Summary of Positive Alternatives and Approaches to Counteracting the Influence of Sexualization

Girls, boys, and those who support them can work through a number of venues to counteract the influence of a sexualizing culture. Schools are beginning to recognize the importance of media literacy. When media literacy programs teach girls to critique and understand the salience of sexualizing images in the media, the hope is that they will be better protected from these images. Comprehensive sex education can also address the issue of sexualizing media, culture, and peers and counter their influence by teaching girls and boys the importance of autonomy and mutual respect in sexual relationships.

Furthermore, schools that provide athletic and other extracurricular opportunities that help girls develop a more empowering view of their bodies may also protect girls from the influence of sexualization. Parents and other adults, through co-viewing and discussion, can help young minds think critically about what they see. They can also

influence youth through spiritual or moral education programs. Many Internet magazines, alternative magazines for girls, books, and films developed by feminist and women's organizations encourage girls to form their own alternative perspectives to the sexualizing influences in the culture. Girls of color have, in the past, shown a resistance to damaging mainstream images, and studying the roots of such resistance may lead to new practices and approaches for combating the effects of sexualization. Girls themselves can protest these sexualizing images just as the girls who protested A&F T-shirts did. Support for these kinds of efforts can come from girls' groups, schools, families, religious institutions, and especially from girls themselves.

Recommendations

I. Research

A solid research base has explored the effects of having an objectified body image or viewing objectified body images in the media. Much previous work, however, has focused on women. Future studies focusing on girls are needed. In addition, more culturally competent, focused work is required to document the phenomenon of the sexualization of girls; to explore the short- and long-term harm of viewing, listening to, and buying into a sexualized pathway to power; and to test alternative presentations of girlhood, sexuality, and power. We recommend that psychologists conduct research to:

1. Document the frequency of sexualization, specifically of girls, and examine whether sexualization is increasing.

2. Examine and inform our understanding of the circumstances under which the sexualization of girls occurs and identify factors involving the media and products that either contribute to or buffer against the sexualization of girls.

3. Examine the presence or absence of the sexualization of girls and women in all media but especially in movies, music videos, music lyrics, video games, books, blogs, and Internet sites. In particular, research is needed to examine the extent to which girls are portrayed in sexualized and objectified ways and whether this has increased over time. In addition, it is important that these

studies focus specifically on sexualization rather than on sexuality more broadly or on other constructs such as gender-role stereotyping.

4. Describe the influence and/or impact of sexualization on girls. This includes both short- and long-term effects of viewing or buying into a sexualizing objectifying image, how these effects influence girls' development, self-esteem, friendships, and intimate relationships, ideas about femininity, body image, physical, mental, and sexual health, sexual satisfaction, desire for plastic surgery, risk factors for early pregnancy, abortion, and sexually transmitted infections, attitudes toward women, other girls, boys, and men, as well as educational aspirations and future career success.

5. Explore issues of age compression ("adultification" of young girls and "youthification" of adult women), including prevalence, impact on the emotional well-being of girls and women, and influences on behavior.

6. Explore differences in presentation of sexualized images and effects of these images on girls of color; lesbian, bisexual, questioning, and transgendered girls; girls of different cultures and ethnicities; girls of different religions; girls with disabilities; and girls from all socioeconomic groups.

7. Identify media (including advertising) and marketing alternatives to sexualized images of girls, such as positive depictions of sexuality.

8. Identify effective, culturally competent protective factors (e.g., helping adolescent girls develop a nonobjectified model of normal, healthy sexual development and expression through school or other programs).

9. Evaluate the effectiveness of programs and interventions that promote positive alternatives and approaches to the sexualization of girls. Particular attention should be given to programs and interventions at the individual, family, school, and/or community level.

10. Explore the relationship between the sexualization of girls and societal issues such as sexual abuse, child pornography, child prostitution, and the trafficking of girls. Research on the potential associations between the sexualization of girls and the sexual exploitation of girls is virtually nonexistent, and the need for this line of inquiry is pressing.

11. Investigate the relationships between international issues such as immigration and globalization and the sexualization of girls worldwide. Document the global prevalence of the sexualization of girls and the types of sexualization that occur in different countries or regions and any regional differences in the effects of sexualization. Assess the effects of sexualization on immigrant girls and determine whether these effects are moderated by country of origin, age at immigration, and level of acculturation.

12. Conduct controlled studies on the efficacy of working directly with girls and girls' groups that address these issues, as well as other prevention/intervention programs.

13. Researchers who are conducting studies on related topics (e.g., physical attractiveness, body awareness, or acceptance of the thin ideal) should consider the impact of sexualization as they develop their findings.

II. Practice

As practitioners, psychologists can perform a valuable service by raising awareness of the negative impact of the sexualization of girls—on girls, as well as on boys, women, and men. As individuals and in collaboration with others, practitioners are encouraged to address the sexualization of girls. We recommend:

1. That APA make the Report of the Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls available to practitioners working with children and adolescents in order to familiarize them with information and resources relevant to the sexualization of girls and objectifying behavior on the part of girls.

2. That APA make the Report of the Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls available to practitioners as a source of information on assisting girls in developing the skills necessary to advocate for themselves and counter these adverse messages, taking into account the impact and influence of family and other relationships.

III. Education and Training

Education and training focusing on the prevalence and impact of the sexualization of girls are needed at all levels of psychology to raise awareness within the discipline of psychology and among psychologists about these important issues. We recommend:

1. That APA disseminate information about the Report of the Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls to instructors at the middle-school, high-school, and undergraduate levels and to chairs of graduate departments of psychology.

2. That information from the Report of the Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls be considered for inclusion in future revisions of the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* and *Guidelines on the Undergraduate Psychology Major* by the groups charged with revising these documents.

3. That chairs of graduate departments of psychology and of graduate departments in other areas in which psychologists work be encouraged to consider information from the Report of the Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls as curricula are developed within their programs and to aid in the dissemination of the report.

4. That information from the Report of the Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls be considered for development as continuing education and online academy programming, in partnership with APA's Continuing Education in Psychology Office.

5. That the Ethics Committee and APA Ethics Office consider and use this report in developing ethics educational and training materials for psychologists and make this report available to the group responsible for the next revision of the APA "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct."

IV. Public Policy

APA, in collaboration with other organizations and through its advocacy efforts, is encouraged to advocate for and better support understanding of the nature and impact of the sexualization of girls, as well as identification and broad implementation of strategies to combat this serious societal problem. We recommend:

1. That APA advocate for funding to support needed research in the areas outlined above.

2. That APA advocate for funding to support the development and implementation by public agencies and private organizations of media literacy programs, including interactive media, in schools that combat sexualization and objectification.

3. That APA advocate for the inclusion of information about sexualization and objectification in health and other related programs, including comprehensive sex education and other sexuality education programs.

4. That APA encourage federal agencies to support the development of programming that may counteract damaging images of girlhood and test the effects of such programs—for example, Web "zines" (i.e., Web magazines), extracurricular activities (such as athletics), and programs that help girls feel powerful in ways other than through a sexy appearance.

5. That APA work with Congress and relevant federal agencies and industry to reduce the use of sexualized images of girls in all forms of media and products.

V. Public Awareness

The task force offers the following recommendations with the goal of raising public awareness about this important issue. Achieving this goal will require a comprehensive, grassroots, communitywide effort. Participants and stakeholders will include parents and other caregivers, educators, young people, community-based organizations, religious communities, the media, advertisers, marketing professionals, and manufacturers. Overarching strategies will be needed to build linkages and partnerships among the community members. If the goal of raising public awareness is left unmet, the mission of this work will be significantly curtailed. We recommend:

1. That APA seek outside funding to support the development and implementation of an initiative to address the issues raised in this report and identify outside partners to collaborate on these goals. The long-term goals of this initiative, to be pursued in collaboration with these outside partners, should include the following:

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- Develop age-appropriate multimedia education resources representing ethnically and culturally diverse young people (boys and girls) for parents, educators, health care providers, and community-based organizations, available in English and other languages, to help facilitate effective conversations about the sexualization of girls and its impact on girls, as well as on boys, women, and men.

- Convene forums that will bring together members of the media and a panel of leading experts in the field to examine and discuss (a) the sexualization of girls in the United States, (b) the findings of this task force report, and (c) strategies to increase awareness about this issue and reduce negative images of girls in the media.

- Develop media awards for positive portrayals of girls as strong, competent, and nonsexualized (e.g., the best television portrayal of girls or the best toy).

- Convene forums with industry partners, including the media, advertisers, marketing professionals, and manufacturers, to discuss the presentation of sexualized images and the potential negative impact on girls and to develop relationships with the goal of providing guidance on appropriate material for varying developmental ages and on storylines and programming that reflect the positive portrayals of girls.

2. That school personnel, parents and other caregivers, community-based youth and parenting organizations, and local business and service organizations encourage positive extracurricular activities that help youth build nurturing connections with peers and enhance self-esteem based on young people's abilities and character rather than on their appearance.

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Appendix
Empowering Girls: Media Literacy

This list of resources was provided to APA's Council of Representatives with the Report of the Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls and has been filed with APA. This means that the list of resources has not been adopted as a policy of APA nor has APA endorsed each of the resources cited. This list of resources is provided only for information and reference purposes.

About-Face
www.about-face.org/

ACT—Alliance for Children and Television
www.act-aet.tv/english/index.asp

Advocates for Youth
www.advocatesforyouth.org

Center for Media Literacy
www.medialit.org/focus/ster1_articles.html

Dads and Daughters
www.dadsanddaughters.org

Girl Scouts of America
www.girlscouts.org

Girls Inc.
www.girlsinc.org

Girls Inc. Media Literacy
www.girlsinc.org/ic/page.php?id=1.2.3

Girls, Women, + Media Project
www.mediaandwomen.org/resources.html

Hardy Girls Healthy Women
www.hardygirlshealthywomen.org

Mainely Girls
www.midcoast.com/~megirls/

Media Awareness Network
www.media-awareness.ca/english/index.cfm
www.media-awareness.ca/english/special_initiatives/girl_guides/index.cfm

Media Literacy Clearinghouse
http://medialit.med.sc.edu/bodyimage.htm

medialiteracy.com
www1.medialiteracy.com/representation.jsp

Mediawise
www.mediafamily.org

New Moon Magazine
www.newmooncatalog.com/store/departments.asp?dept=7

See Jane/Improving Gender Portrayals in Children's Media
http://seejane.org/

Teen Voices/Women's Express
www.teenvoices.com/tvhome.html

Third Wave Foundation
www.thirdwavefoundation.org/

uniquely Me! The Girl Scouts/Dove Self-Esteem Program
www.girlscouts.org/program/program_opportunities/
leadership/uniquelyme.asp

Words Can Work
www.wordscanwork.com