Research Report:

Addressing the sexualization of women and girls

YWCA CULTURE SHIFT PROJECT

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Addressing the sexualization of women and girls

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Report Authors
Dr. Kerry MacKelvie
Diana Bulley
Debbie Cox

Contributors
Chantelle Krish
Lori Boland

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Introduction

A naked woman perches on her hands and knees, serving as a table displaying an array of men's shoes, bags and belts in a men's magazine fashion spread.

On the subject of former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's bid for the presidency, Donald Trump tweeted to his millions of followers: "If Hillary can't satisfy her husband what makes her think she can satisfy America."

The presence of sexually objectified women and girls is widespread and as a society we are confronted daily with images, such as the one described above used to sell men's accessories, and Trump-style narratives that serve to reinforce the value of women and girls solely as sex object or thing.

The sexualization of women and girls creates and perpetuates an imbalance of power and gender equality. It has consequences for both men and women, boys and girls entangled in the gender roles established by objectification.

Research links sexualization with three of the most common mental health problems experienced by girls and women: eating disorders, low self-esteem and depression. Sexualization is also known to cause:

- Mental health issues such as anxiety, depression and body dissatisfaction
- Reduced cognitive development
- Poor sexual health, including diminished sexual assertiveness and decreased condom use
- The endorsement of sexual objectification and sexist attitudes
- Problems with intimacy
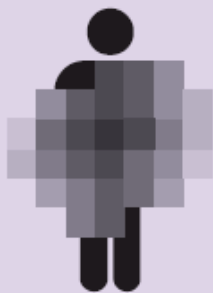
CULTURE SHIFT

IDEA STATEMENT

Videos and images in the media often use blurred areas to cover up nudity or something gratuitous. When taken out of this context, a blurred area symbolizes a deliberate attempt to obscure. In this case, we are covering up the gender, and allowing the person, and the mind, to remain. When we are not labeled by our gender and sexual bodies, we are seen for our individual thoughts and ideas.

There are indications that sexualization of girls is linked to the hypermasculinization, or overexpression of masculine stereotypes, of boys and in turn this dynamic perpetuates violence against women.

In early 2016, the YWCA Metro Vancouver commissioned the IdeaSpace team to conduct a research project to establish the connections among sexualization and hypermasculinization of girls and boys and violence against women, and demonstrate how they create an environment that supports violence against women.

The purpose of the research project was to define and confirm these links and develop recommendations for action in four key sectors:

1. Policy

2. Public Education and Awareness Initiatives

3. Curriculum

4. Program

The recommendations for action are intended to inform the development of the YWCA's Culture Shift Project, a three-year initiative to:

- Bring attention to the link between hypermasculinization, sexualization and violence against women
- Change attitudes and behaviours related to gender over time
- Increase equality between men and women

Through a literature review, interviews with key experts and focus groups with youth, the research project examined findings, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours about sexualization and hypermasculinization and how they relate to violence against women in society.

This report presents our research findings and a list of recommendations for action for consideration by the YWCA and the Culture Shift Project team. The recommendations are presented here as a set and are described in detail under *Findings and Recommendations.*

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

1. Advocate for a renewed gender portrayal policy for Canadian broadcasting

2. Identify opportunities to advocate for gender portrayal policies within other media

3. Advocate for a gender equity in public institutions and private businesses

4. Build public awareness about the impacts of sexualization and hypermasculinization

5. Advocate for updates to provincial curriculum that address issues of sexualization, hypermasculinization and healthy relationships. Promote media literacy in sexual health education as a tool to mitigate the impacts of sexualization

6. Use physical activity and wellness programming to empower young girls, develop physical competency and curb the impact of hypersexualizing influences

7. Use physical activity and wellness as a platform to empower boys, assist with development of healthy masculinities and curb the impact of hypermasculinization

8. Engage parents through schools, community organizations and public awareness initiatives to educate them about healthy sexuality for all children and youth, including the influences of sexualization of girls, hypermasculinization of boys and pornography

Definitions

Sexualization

According to the American Psychological Association (APA) Task Force Report on the Sexualization of Girls, sexualization occurs when:

1. A person's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics

2. A person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy

3. 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

4. Sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person (1)

Women and girls apply a wide range of information in developing their sexual roles. Examining the social and cultural context in which girls are maturing—and exploring the ways in which girls interpret and make meaning of sexual information—is important in understanding sexualization (2). The APA Task Force Report on the Sexualization of Girls organized the factors influencing the sexualization of girls into three contributing categories:

1. **The contribution by society**—the cultural norms, expectations, and values that are communicated in various ways, including through the media

2. **An interpersonal contribution**—girls can be treated as, and encouraged to be, sexual objects by family, peers and others

3. **Self-sexualization**—girls may treat and experience themselves as sexual objects. If girls learn that sexualized behavior and appearance are approved of and rewarded by society and by the people whose opinions matter most to them, they are likely to internalize these standards, therefore engaging in self-sexualization (1)

Hypermasculinization

Hypermasculinity is a psychological term describing the overexpression of masculine stereotypes (3). The predominant definition of hypermasculinization was put forth by Mosher and Sirkin (1984) and consists of three interrelated variables:

- Callous sexual attitudes toward women
- The belief that violence is manly
- The experience of danger as exciting (4)

Mosher and Sirkin suggested that a hypermasculinized male is predisposed to engaging in behaviours that demonstrate power and dominance in their environment. These behaviours tend to be expressed through interactions with women, since women are often viewed as weaker within these stereotypes (3) (4). This is consistent with literature suggesting that the devaluation of female traits is a defining factor of hypermasculinization (5).

Emotional experience and interpersonal dominance (such as the likelihood to exert power to achieve a goal) are also predictive factors in hypermasculinization (3). Men who have more emotional experience in long-term relationships are less likely to exhibit hypermasculinized characteristics, while those who apply interpersonal dominance are more likely to exhibit hypermasculinized characteristics.

Various studies have linked hypermasculinity to negative outcomes including aggression toward women, men, and those who do not fit gender norms, risk-taking behaviours, depression, alexithymia (inability to identify and describe emotions in oneself), poor academic performance and reduced coping skills (5).

> **Sexuality is healthy and sexualization is not. The Culture Shift Project highlights the harmful impacts that sexualization and hypermasculinization have on society and offers recommendations for systemic change.**

Research approach and methodology

The goals of the research project were to:

- Highlight how hypermasculinization and sexualization create an environment that supports violence against women

- Identify recommendations for how government and community leaders, decision makers in business, educators and youth can start a dialogue and take action

Our approach was to balance the perspectives of lead researchers in the area with the real-world experiences of program developers and young people.

Through a literature review, interviews with eight leaders and experts in this area and focus groups with 21 youth we examined literature, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours about sexualization and hypermasculinization and how they relate to violence against women in society. The synthesized research gathered from these multiple sources was used to generate ideas for action.

The content within the callout boxes on pages 17 and 22 reflect the YWCA's concurrent, ongoing work to scan the policy, curriculum, program and campaign environments for international examples of actions to curb sexualization of girls, and is presented as a complement to the research completed within this project.

THE CULTURE SHIFT PROJECT

The YWCA is committed to taking action to end violence against women by addressing sexualization of girls and hypermasculinity of boys.

Focusing on the four key sectors of policy, program, curriculum and campaign, the YWCA and its partners will implement the Culture Shift Project in order to:

- Bring attention to the link between hypermasculinization, sexualization and violence against women

- Change attitudes and behaviours over time

- Increase equality between men and women

Research activities

Research activity 1: Literature review

Our review of 45 publications[1] was focused mainly on academic literature and our intent was to provide an overview of key issues and recent perspectives, rather than a comprehensive or systematic review of all publications in the area.

Our key findings related to the sexualization of girls, hypermasculinization of boys and violence against women are presented below.

"Guys think this is how life is, which is why guys don't know how to treat girls and there is misogyny happening; they think they should treat women the way the man in this ad is."

—Youth focus group participant

Research activity 2: Key informant interviews

Informed by the literature review we then interviewed eight leaders and experts specializing in one or more of the sectors to learn about the work they are currently undertaking to address sexualization and or hypermasculinization, what they believe still needs to be done and what role and actions they think the YWCA could take to advance gender equality and reduce violence against women.

Research activity 3: Exploratory action research with youth

Guided by the ideas and recommendations from the key informants we then set out to hear from youth to determine their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours and test ideas for action. This research activity was also an opportunity to generate excitement and interest in the topic and prime youth for action in the second phase of this project.

We held two male and two female groups separately, with a total of 21 participants. The discussions were co-facilitated by a peer leader and a member of the Ideaspace research team. The research team trained peer leaders and sought their input on the discussion guide to ensure it was relevant to their lived experience and their knowledge of their peer group.

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1   Our summary of references at the end of this report reflects the summary nature of this document, and as such does not contain the full list of all 45 publications that were reviewed.

Key findings:
Sexualization of girls, hypermasculinization of boys and violence against women

Within our literature review, we synthesized perspectives and definitions of sexualization, hypermasculinization and their relationship to violence against women and girls.

Key outcomes of sexualization of girls and hypermasculinization of boys

The key outcomes of sexualization of girls and hypermasculinization of boys relate to power imbalance and violence between the genders, relationships across genders, and health. These are discussed briefly in the next three sections, touching on their relationship to violence towards women and girls where possible.

Gender roles and power imbalance

The sexualization of girls and hypermasculinization of boys contributes to a social environment that lends itself to gender violence (1,7). Violence against women is related to sexualization of girls and hypermasculinization of boys as these two factors are part of an "overarching frame of gender inequality and imbalance of gender-power relations" (6).

Fleming et al. found that *"men's behaviors…help them construct an outward image of power over women that is aligned with a socially constructed ideal of masculinity"* (7). To uphold their perceived gender profile, hypermasculine men assert power over women through various behaviors, including physical and sexual aggression (3, 8).

A society or environment rife with gender inequalities and patriarchal family structures facilitates violence against women (7,9). The APA Task Force indicated that the sexualization of women and girls can be linked to sexism, sex bias, and sexist attitudes and that girls, through sexualization, may begin to reflect sexist attitudes and tolerate negative sexual stereotypes of women and sexual violence against women (1,10). Negative gender attitudes that are maintained through the sexualization of girls and hypermasculinization of boys (3) are critical factors in violence against women and girls:

"Men who hold more traditional gender role ideologies … are more likely to perpetrate violence. Additionally, men who feel stress about their ability to conform to normative ideas regarding what it means to be a man are more likely to perpetrate inter-partner violence. Societies with greater gender inequities are more likely to teach young men a traditional gender role ideology and increase pressure that men act in traditionally masculine ways, including by perpetrating violence." (7)

An environment that is permissive towards sexualization and hypermasculinization is permissive towards violence (11,12). The defining factors of hypermasculinity (callous sexual attitudes toward women, the belief that violence is manly (4)) were predictive of intimate partner violence in one study (9). Gender norms conveyed through hypersexualization processes and media, teach men to overvalue hierarchy, aggression, power, respect and emotional suppression (7,9). Such norms act as the precursors for violence against women, and general violent behavior among men (9,21). However, not all men and women respond to environmental (societal and interpersonal) messages in the same way and even in highly patriarchal societies, there are many men who do not exert physical violence (9). Women and men may become complicit with patriarchal gender norms. Exhibiting compliance contributes to an environment that propagates these norms—via acceptance and continuation of the processes of sexualization of girls and hypermasculinization of boys (9).

Outcomes related to relationships

As mentioned in the previous section, several experimental studies have found that hypermasculinization can make it more difficult for men to find appropriate partners, enjoy intimacy and experience satisfaction with their current female partner (1). For example, Weaver et al. showed that exposure to pornographic imagery resulted in males reporting their own partners as less attractive (13). Further, hypermasculinization was linked to courtship priorities centered on appearance. Ward et al. posed that hypermasculinization had a negative effect on boys' ability to interpret female cues appropriately and accurately judge if a female was interested in pursuing a relationship (14). They further argued that hypermasculinization resulted in males developing unattainable standards of female beauty and feeling disappointment when these expectations were not met (10). Together, these observations raise concerns as they highlight the negative impact of hypermasculinization on boys' and men's abilities to form balanced, open, respectful and intimate relationships (14).

Outcomes related to health

Sexualization of girls is linked to three key mental health issues: eating disorders, low self-esteem and depression (1). Further, there is evidence that the sexualization of girls contributes to impaired cognitive performance in young women, as well as body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, low self-esteem, depressive affect and even physical health problems in young women and teenaged girls (1). Fredrickson and Roberts argued that the decline in the estimations of girls' math abilities around puberty can be linked to increased self-objectification and insecurity related to their bodies (15).

Hypermasculinization in boys is a risk factor for risk-taking behavior, body dissatisfaction, and depression. In their study of self-objectification in boys, Vandenbosch et al. indicated: *"the self-objectification process [in boys] has been linked with several mental health risks, such as body dissatisfaction and drive for muscularity, and with appearance modification behaviors, such as disordered eating and consuming commercial commodities promising increased attractiveness"* (16).

Further, a study on how masculinity and health are constructed proposed that health-related beliefs are a way of demonstrating masculinity and femininity (17). This may result in men undermining their health in order to demonstrate their masculinity (17) through, for example, binge drinking. Body dissatisfaction arising from trying to adhere to feminine and masculine ideals has been linked to smoking in young people (18). Hypersexualization was linked to reduced sexual health, less use of condoms and less sexual assertiveness (19).

The relationship between the sexualization of girls, hypermasculinization of boys and violence against women

"Future interventions should emphasize work with both men and boys and women and girls to change social norms on gender relations … Critical analysis of men's privilege, power, and how they use their power is crucial to transform men … Work with both women and men is important, because women often take for granted men's power and dominance over them." (20)

Worldwide, one in every three women will experience physical violence, sexual violence, or both, from an intimate partner, or sexual violence from someone other than a partner (21). Sexual violence is rooted in gender inequality and discrimination, and estimates from the International Violence Against Women Study indicated that between 25% - 34% of women from high income countries including Denmark, Australia, Sweden and Switzerland reported ever having been raped in their life (12). Well-designed strategies aimed at prevention of violence against women and girls are critically needed.

Recently, the Lancet published a series of papers on violence against women and girls, which included a "call to action"(21), "a conceptual shift in prevention" (20), and "lessons from practice" (6). We treat these publications as fundamental to our research. The papers contributed greatly to our understanding of the relationships among violence, sexualization and hypermasculinization, especially as they relate to an imbalance of power between males and females:

"Violence against women is a widespread social problem rooted in the unequal distribution of resources and power between men and women, and institutionalised through laws, policies, and social norms that grant preferential rights to men" (21).

Over the past decade or so, there has been widespread recognition that masculinity and gender-related social norms are implicated in violence and as such, interventions to prevent violence have been increasingly directed towards mitigating these factors (20).

All factors that maintain the imbalance of power between men and women or girls and boys, influence violence against women and girls. Indeed, "to be born a girl in a patriarchal society is a fundamental risk factor for various types of gender-based violence" (6). As sexualization of girls allows for objectification by boys and men—and increases self-objectification—it thereby diminishes or obliterates girls' and women's value and leads to continuing violence against them. At the same time, the maintenance of masculine ideals through the hypermasculinization of boys serves to preserve the imbalance of power between the sexes. Simply put, sexualization of girls allows for males' dominant position in society, hypermasculinization of boys maintains that dominant position and both factors feed into the continuation of violence against women and girls.

An understanding of the relationship between violence and masculinity is important to the discussion of interventions aimed at preventing violence against women and girls, via addressing the hypermasculinization process. Jewkes et al. (20) discussed how men's association with violence is not simply Y-chromosome determined, difference in violence prevalence and patterns vary greatly in different settings (20). The connection is in gender: "the social values, roles, behaviours and attributes thought to be appropriate and expected for men and women" (20). Although men and women tend to be more similar in equitable societies, importantly, social value is higher for men than women in virtually all societies, and this results in various norms and powers.

One common source of power for men is the use of violence over women (20). Frequently, the dominance of masculinity becomes accepted by women and men as normal (20). The internalization of this concept begins in childhood for both girls and boys, and is aspired to by most men, regardless of their ability to realize it. By adulthood, dominant masculinity and its associated roles and power differentials, are accepted for both women and men. As for where the sexualization of girls fits within this concept of dominant masculinity, the product—"sexy girls" and/or objectification of girls and women—is a social norm in itself that maintains and promotes the hegemony. As Jewkes and colleagues point out, both men and women therefore need to be engaged in efforts to change this social norm (20).

Sexualization of girls allows for male's dominant position in society. Hypermasculization of boys maintains that dominant position, and both factors feed into the continuation of violence against women and girls.

Transformation of power across the ecological model: A framework for the Culture Shift Project

The problem of violence against women and girls is a complex one, requiring sustained, multisector, collaborative action that has impact across the societal, community, interpersonal and individual levels.

Michau et al. (6) provide a useful framework for demonstrating areas of imbalance and gender inequality and structuring the multisectoral actions and activities required to shift to a balance of power and gender equality:

Imbalance of power/gender inequality

Discriminatory laws and policies

Little funding

Dep+rioritisation of violence against women and girls

Impunity by decision makers

Health, law, and security not responding

Inequitable norms and practices

Religious and cultural justification

Explicit support of VAWG

Stigma, shame, and silence

Internalized acceptance of male superiority/female inferiority

Acceptance of men's control

Lack of political will to implement law and policy

Societal · Community · Interpersonal · Individual

Submissive femininity
Dominant masculinity

Men's use of violence against women and girls

Victim bears costs

Preventing violence against women and girls/transformation of power

Social movements for state accountability

Community outreach

Critical reflection

Empowerment and opportunity for women
Support and accountability for men

First responders

Edutainment/change in public state

Advocacy

Movement building

Skill building

Skill building

Consciousness raising

Activism

Neighbourhood organising

Popular education

Funding

Recognition, respect, and dialogue

Public opinion campaigns

Skill building

Enabling environment

Collective action

Legal and policy reform

Supportive environment
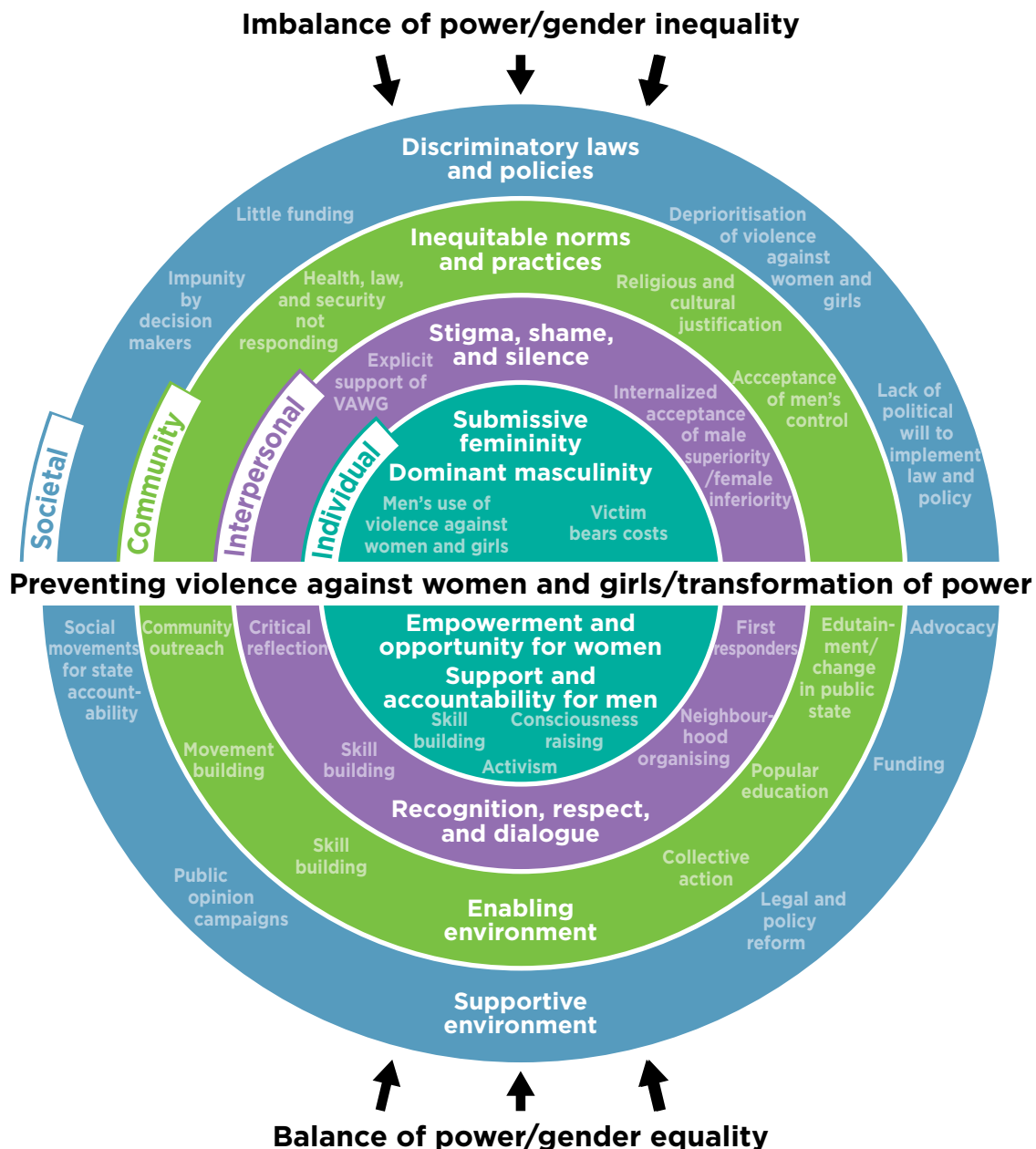
Balance of power/gender equality

Figure 1. Michau et al.'s Transformation of Power Within the Ecological Model (6). We referred to this model in developing our recommendations to ensure a broad, multisectoral reach. Our recommendations for action for each of the four sectors are presented below.

Key findings:
Recommendations for action

We believe that the actions most closely related to addressing sexualization of girls and hypermasculinization of boys lie within focusing on social norms of gender and shifting systems that perpetuate violence against women, and our recommendations largely focus on those areas. We considered the possibility of impact across the societal, community, interpersonal and individual levels in creating our recommendations.

Importantly, the strategies should fit together, and not be designed nor implemented within silos. It is necessary to consider the intersections among factors across the individual, peer, household, relationship, and broader community levels (20). To illustrate the possible integration across levels, Jewkes et al. describes *"work to change gender norms in schools, which underscores the need to focus on interventions within a classroom (e.g., lesson and curriculum), institutional policy (e.g., on sexual harassment, corporal punishment), interactions (e.g., respect shown by teachers for learners, bullying), and the wider environment (e.g., the role of parents in support of schools' teaching)."* (20)

Of all the possibilities, we have put forward recommendations that we see as having the most potential for implementation by the YWCA and their partners, because they achieve one or more of the following criteria:

- ■ Have a solid rationale stemming from the research
- ■ Build on existing programs
- ■ Act at the individual, interpersonal, community and societal level aligned with a multisectoral approach

The recommendations for each sector are described below.

Policy

To address the drivers of gender inequality which maintain social norms on gender, overarching interventions that have an all-of-society impact such as through policy and system change are essential.

At the societal level, violence against women and girls is influenced by law, policy, and service infrastructure, and each of these contribute to public understanding and practical responses (6).

Typically, interventions at the societal level have been centered on advocacy to change discriminatory laws and legal and policy infrastructures to ensure the appropriate response to violence against women and girls (6). There has been little evaluation of the effects of laws, policies, and the availability of services on violence prevalence or prevention. However, an analysis of the influences on policy development related to violence against women demonstrated that the feminist civil society activism for social norm and policy change had the greatest effect in catalyzing government action (6).

Laws and policies are critical in establishing the unacceptability of violence against women and girls, but do not stand alone in terms of prevention and response mechanisms (6). Coordinated, multi-sector action needs to be created and implemented in parallel with these supportive structures to fully address violence against women and girls.

Summary of key findings

In their "Call To Action", Garcia-Moreno make recommendations for policy and legislative changes critical to action against violence (21):

- ■ Ensure national laws, policies and institutions in all sectors promote equality for women and men and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, for instance in ownership and inheritance of assets, custody of children resulting from a partnership, freedom to travel, and freedom to enter and leave marriage and access divorce and address other forms of discrimination that women and girls might experience, such as by class, caste, disability and others

- ■ Support women's equal access to education, income and safe job opportunities through legislation and sector-specific strategies

While we were unable to identify in the literature an overarching, government policy or structural/societal change that addressed sexualization of girls or hypermasculinization of boys specifically, policies that address the rights of women are related. It is possible to see the opportunity to expand such policies to include addressing sexualization of girls specifically. For example, A Right to Respect: Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2010–2020 (Australia) was the first public policy in the world to focus on primary

prevention of violence against women and girls across societal, community and individual levels.

The policy framework used a public health approach with a population-level scope, and aimed to build "non-violent and non-discriminatory social norms; create gender-equitable, safe and inclusive communities and organizations; and build equal and respectful relationships between women and men" (6). Although it does not include specific reference to policies that reduce sexualization of girls in the media for example,[2] it is clear that this type of work would have a good fit within an existing policy framework built around creating gender-equitable communities and organizations.

We acknowledge that work towards gender equality policies at the federal level is a critical piece underpinning all efforts to reduce sexualization of girls and women, and understand that the YWCA is already

working on this through their advocacy efforts. Further, interviewees acknowledged the work the YWCA is currently doing in the area of gender equality policy and urged them to continue to occupy this leadership role.

Through our interviews we learned tangible progress in the policy area is being made with the Canadian Teachers Federation adopting two resolutions on the hypersexualization of girls at the 2014 Annual General Meeting (see Figure 2) on page 18.

TRONDHEIM, NORWAY:

January 2018: Trondheim, Norway's third-largest city is banning all ads placed on city-owned property that might contribute to a negative body image among residents: "The ban, prohibits advertisements that are offensive or discriminating against groups or individuals, or advertisements that convey an incorrect picture of the model(s) appearance and causes increased pressure on body image. As a minimum, advertisements where body shape is Photoshopped should be labeled." The policy which takes effect January 2018 will regulate all contracts with the city of Trondheim until 2030 and aims to not only limit unrealistic Photoshopped ads which contribute to unrealistic standards of beauty and body ideals but to also create a debate about the impact commercials have on body image. (32)

Figure 2. Email correspondence, Michelsen Ottar, Trondheim City Councillor, November 2016

LONDON, ENGLAND

June 2016: London Mayor Sadiq Khan pledged to ban adverts promoting "unhealthy or unrealistic" body images after viewing a print ad for weight loss supplements which read

"Are you beach body ready?" in a London subway station. Sadiq, father to two teenage girls, said "I am extremely concerned about this kind of advertising which can demean people, particularly women, and make them ashamed of their bodies. It is high time it came to an end." The mayor's office is working with the advertising industry to ensure images are not used that are potentially harmful to young people's mental health and how they view themselves. This gender portrayal policy takes action against ads that promote unrealistic expectations about body image and health by instructing the city's transport network, Transport for London (TfL), to ban them. (31)

2   See related organizational-level policies and projects regarding sexual-ization/representation of girls and women in advertising: Seventeen Magazine (http://www.nydailynews.com/self-esteem-article), and Dove Campaign for Real Beauty (Dove_Campaign_for_Real_Beauty). We did not identify any evaluation of the impact of these policies.

Section 7
Hypersexualization (2015) 5.7.1

CTF is opposed to the hypersexualization of women and girls which depicts them as sexual objects.

5.7.1.1 The hypersexualization of women and girls is degrading and affects how they conceptualize femininity and sexuality, leading them to accept more stereotypical and abusive notions about gender and sexual roles.

5.7.1.2 The hypersexualization of young girls and depictions of violence against girls and women have a direct impact on how boys and girls view relationships and their attitudes towards sexual violence.

5.7.1.3 The hypersexualization of women, girls and boys often leads to unhealthy dieting, eating disorders, unnecessary surgery, poor self-image, depression and other mental illnesses.

5.7.1.4 Teaching media literacy helps students identify and understand the hypersexualized messages in advertising, music videos and lyrics, video games, movies, television and other forms of media.

5.7.1.5 The fashion, entertainment and video games industries have a social responsibility to eliminate hypersexual content from their product.

Figure 3. Resolutions from the Canadian Teachers' Federation's 2014 Annual General Meeting

Further, among the Action Resolutions contained in the Federation's Handbook 2015/2016, Section 1 Hypersexualization 1.1.1 states:

> *The Canadian Teachers' Federation express its opposition to the hypersexualization of women, girls and boys to the Minister responsible for Status of Women Canada, urging her to introduce legislation that would prohibit the broadcasting and dissemination of media products and messages that depict women, girls and boys as sexual objects.*

Policy efforts to reduce hypersexualization are complemented by policies that focus on gender

"Children are being manipulated by marketing. Children are being used for commercial gain. We need to look critically at how children are being portrayed."

—Key informant interview

portrayal in the media. In Canada, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters' "Sex Role Portrayal Code for Television and Radio Programming" was developed in 1990 to "advance the awareness of, and sensitivity to, the problems related to the negative or inequitable sex role portrayal of persons. This Code is intended to assist in overcoming systemic discrimination portrayed in broadcast programming, based on gender."[3]

In March 2008, the Sex Role Portrayal code was discontinued and replaced by the current Equitable Portrayal Code which is "intended to overcome unduly negative portrayal and stereotyping in broadcast programming, including commercial messages, based on matters of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status or physical or mental disability."[4]

Restoring and updating a gender specific code, separate from the more general diversity code would better address the issue of gender portrayal undiluted by the issue of diversity portrayal.

3   http://www.cbsc.ca/codes/sex-role-portrayal-code-for-television-and-radio-programming/
4   http://www.cbsc.ca/codes/cab-equitable-portrayal-code/

Recommendations and key activities

RECOMMENDATION 1:
Advocate for a renewed gender portrayal policy for Canadian broadcasting.

Key Activities:

- Support the federal and provincial government agencies responsible for developing, implementing and enforcing gender portrayal guidelines and policies.

- Advocate for a renewed gender portrayal code for Canadian broadcasting, one that highlights issues of sexualization and hypermasculinization and does not dilute the issue of gender portrayal with the issue of diversity portrayal.

RECOMMENDATION 2:
Identify opportunities to advocate for gender portrayal policies within other media.

Key Activities:

- Conduct an environmental scan to determine which organizations currently have and do not have these policies.

- Work with groups to encourage them to adopt a policy, if one is not in place. (e.g., transit advertising, advertising in public spaces (billboards), malls, etc.)

RECOMMENDATION 3:
Advocate for a gender equity policy in public institutions and private businesses.

Key Activities:

- Encourage government agencies, public institutions, and private businesses to develop, implement and enforce gender equity guidelines and policies. To support policy development, create a fact sheet characterizing the benefits to agencies and organizations of adopting a gender equity policy.

- Work with the following groups across Canada to support policy awareness and implementation:
    a. Federal governments
    b. Provincial governments
    c. Municipal governments
    d. Universities and colleges
    e. Business community

Public education and awareness initiatives

Campaigns and similar initiatives are important tools for building awareness and educating in order to influence thinking, opinions and behaviour at the individual, interpersonal, community and societal levels. Campaign strategies and tactics can vary greatly depending on desired reach and outcomes, tactics and funding availability.

Summary of key findings

While there are few formal campaigns captured in the literature, three key examples provide models for consideration.

Michau et al. (6) indicate that a key component of effective violence prevention at the individual level is aspirational programming or the presentation of ideas and examples of the world we envision for ourselves (6). In the case of programming that aims to shift notions of masculinity and femininity, "to engage in aspirational programming would involve offering a vision of a positive, equitable relationship and how relationships like these can benefit all family members" (6). Individuals need to be seen and supported as potential agents of change in preventing violence against women and girls. As an example, "[the] One Man Can campaign uses positive messaging to depict men as part of the solution to violence against women and girls. One Man Can works intensely with individual men to present an alternative to dominant masculinity. To further reinforce transformative work at the individual level, One Man Can engages other levels of the ecological model through social marketing, community outreach, advocacy and the media to encourage an enabling environment which supports individual-level change" (6).

The White Ribbon Campaign is a Canadian community-oriented initiative working to end violence against women and girls, targeted at promoting gender equity, healthy relationships and re-defining masculinity. Initiated in 1991, White Ribbon has been encouraging men to wear white ribbons as a "pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls" (30). The main emphasis of the work through education, awareness-raising, outreach, technical assistance, capacity building, partnerships and creative campaigns, is to examine the causes of gender-based violence and create a cultural shift towards eradicating violence.

Finally, the SPARK Movement is a girl-fueled, intergenerational activist organization working online to ignite an anti-racist gender justice movement. The movement was founded in 2010, in response to the Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls. In collaboration with more than 30 partnering

"Really, if we're thinking of a culture shift, we have to start with the youngest people in our society ... because if we can plant these ideas, these seeds, with parents who have young children, then I think we have the potential to raise a new generation of kids that aren't being victimized by the current media culture."

—Key informant interview

"There is a serious shortage of resources for youth in terms of entertaining yet engaging documentaries, or interactive on line content – something that goes beyond an adult talking at them. [Possibly] memes around consent ... There are a few books on relationship violence, but nothing great. There is a need for relevant and engaging ways for teens to learn."

—Key informant interview

organizations articulating strategies to challenge the negative impacts of sexualization, SPARK was launched as a potential solution. The first public activity was a one-day summit that included research presentations, "action stations" for girls and their allies to push back against sexualization, multiple networking opportunities among girls wanting to channel their frustration and anger with adults who shared their commitment, and workshops to build skills through activities and training to provide girls with the tools to become leading activists. On October 22, 2010, SPARK held the SPARK Summit at Hunter College, the City University of New York. SPARK met their goal of raising awareness about the sexualization of girls, disseminated and called for new research on sexualization and engaged girls as social change agents and started a new public dialogue linking the fight against sexualization to the need for "enabling conditions" for young women's

healthy sexuality. Since then, SPARK has trained girls to be activists, organizers and leaders in the fight for gender justice.

Both our key informants and youth focus group participants emphasized the need for the YWCA to continue its advocacy work around sexualization and violence against women in the form of grassroots campaigns as well as participate and partner in national campaigns, where possible.

There was consensus among youth focus group participants that they get the majority of their information online. Youth indicated that the ideal way to engage youth is to have their peers and trusted leaders share authentic, down-to-earth content through social media.

Recommendation and key activities

RECOMMENDATION 4:
Build awareness about the impacts of sexualization and hypermasculinization.

Key Activities:

- Develop key messages about sexualization and hypermasculinization
- Target a range of audiences (parents, youth, decision makers and community organizations)
- Identify creative, audience-focused approaches to deliver the messages
    - Consider partnering with youth to deliver messages to their peers
- Develop implementation strategies to guide activities

Curriculum

Schools are a critical and captive setting for intervening with children and youth. Therefore, the school curriculum is an important avenue for educating on healthy sexuality, including increasing understanding of sexualization of girls, hypermasculinization of boys and the related contributions of both to violence against women and girls.

The gender transformative approach—that seeks to transform gender norms and promote more gender-equitable relations—applies within curriculum as well as programs. Our focus in the curriculum area is on teaching healthy sexuality within an approach that offers children the opportunity to learn about and experience gender equality.

Schools, as a setting, are well-poised to influence equitable gender norms through adolescent violence prevention programs and counter the effects of sexualization and hypermasculinization through curriculum that includes media

literacy, comprehensive sexual education and physical activity/physical literacy. We heard from one of our focus group participants that, "education [is] always more effective than bans." Young people need and want comprehensive sexual health education, and within the right curriculum and with supportive policies, a gender transformative approach would go great lengths towards gender equality in young people.

> **"If consent is truly believed and lived, then violence against women [wouldn't] be happening … We need to be teaching kids that they need permission before they touch anybody."**
>
> *—Key informant interview*

Summary of key findings

It is possible to transform gender norms in the classroom (20), and there are good examples of this in the literature, including the "Gender Equity Movement in Schools" (GEMS) curriculum in South Asia and Vietnam. Trained teachers used face-to-face educational programming to promote critical reflection on gendered behaviours and norms (20). The curriculum engaged 12 to 14-year old boys and girls in discussion and

reflection on gender inequality, providing them with the tools to talk about gender inequality within their own communities. Importantly, GEMS trained teachers to integrate discussions about gender inequality throughout the entire curriculum. Evaluation of the program demonstrated a significant reduction in the percentage of students perpetrating violence on fellow students, substantial changes in the attitudes of students towards traditional roles of women and girls and increased support among students for girls pursuing higher education.

In Canada, White Ribbon offers "The Campaign in a Box," a fully interactive exercise book for grades 5-8 that meets Ontario curriculum expectations, and helps teachers and community leaders teach and promote healthy, equal relationships among boys and girls (33).

There are also good examples of curriculum that focused specifically on preventing intimate partner violence in schools. Most of these interventions were supported by primary work on gender equality and healthy relationships. In two reviews, school-based dating violence interventions, many with both school and community components, have demonstrated good success in preventing intimate partner violence and sexual violence among adolescents (11,27). Overall, De Koker et al. indicated that these types of interventions were most successful if they were based in multiple settings (school and community), did not rely on curriculum alone, focused on key adults in the adolescents' environment (teachers, parents, and community members) and addressed relationship skills (27). These results support the need for a

ONTARIO CURRICULUM:

Responding to public interest and the changing landscape of technology and issues facing youth, the Ontario government committed to updating sexual health curriculum in 2015. The previous curriculum (written in 1998) taught abstinence instead of comprehensive sexual health education that includes safer sex and the importance of consent. The process of creating this curriculum included consultation with 4,000 chairs of parent advisory councils from schools across Ontario. Evidence-based sexual health education leads to young people choosing to delay having sex, to use condoms and other forms of contraception, and to lower the risk of teen pregnancy. In the absence of sexual health education, some children use pornography as a learning tool and at increasingly younger ages. Ontario's updated curriculum takes up issues such as peer pressure and bullying on social media, discrimination based on parents' sexual orientation, gender identity and consent. (32)

comprehensive, multi-sector approach, where reliance is not fully focused on the school system to teach violence prevention.

A strong school intervention that had an effect on male perpetration of violence was a 21-lesson curriculum (26 hours) in Ontario schools (28). The interactive curriculum integrated dating violence prevention with lessons on healthy relationships, sexual health, and substance use, and was delivered by teachers trained in the dynamics of dating violence and healthy relationships (29). There was a significant effect of the intervention on physical dating violence (PDV) for both girls and boys. The cost of training and materials averaged CA\$16 per student (29).

The review noted that because girls typically did not change in their perceived ability to cope with sexual violence, creating enabling environments that make violence unacceptable may be a more important emphasis than self-protection (11). In other words, an "enabling environment" is one in which girls and boys are empowered and resilient, have learned about healthy sexuality and have a real and actionable understanding of the external influences on their sexuality and relationship development (i.e., pornography).

While the influence of pornography—and access to pornography for children—on intimate partner violence and hypersexualization were not covered in these curricula (to our knowledge) nor in the current BC sexual health curriculum, we heard through our interviews that these should be prioritized in a healthy sexuality curriculum.

An interviewee discussed how "the landscape for porn has changed so drastically in the last 10 years and the curriculum has not caught up with it; it's really

important that it does." Another interviewee indicated that the medical community would be a useful partner in advocating for incorporation of the pornography issue into a healthy sexuality curriculum, given the impact of the problematic use of pornography on behaviours and relationships.

Interviewees also focused on the issue of consent within a healthy sexuality curriculum. Though it was acknowledged that this is part of the sexual health curriculum in BC (i.e., "Cup of Tea" video), it was unclear how consistently this was taught and therefore, there is still a need to create and reinforce a "consent culture". Pornography plays a big role in the hypersexualized landscape, and for the most part, does not portray consent.

Curriculum related to media literacy also relates to

> **"Over the years I've been able to teach girls to be more media literate and question messages aimed at girls in media and in music and in society in general. With boys, … we work on breaking down gender stereotypes. You can literally see the lightbulbs go off. Especially in 9-12 year-old range. The rules have been so engrained into them. They are so freed to see they don't have to be that way. I've also helped teach girls to value themselves on who they are as opposed to how they dress and how sexy they are. "**
>
> —*Key informant interview*

> **"If men don't get proper sexual education, these ads might be their only insight into how relationships work."**
>
> —*Focus group participant*

comprehensive sexual health education, given the influence of the media and pornography on sexual development, hypersexualization and violence towards women. Improving children's media literacy contributes to resiliency, and prepares young people to curb the impact of the constant bombardment with sexualized media. One interviewee discussed how they had worked with the Media Smarts curriculum (www.mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/find-lesson) and incorporated issues of gender equality (e.g., a theme about deconstructing how gender is portrayed in media).

To reduce the effects of sexualization of girls and facilitate conversations about sexualization and its impacts on girls, boys, women and men, the APA's Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls recommended developing age-appropriate multimedia education resources representing ethnically and culturally diverse boys and girls for parents, educators, health care providers and community-based organizations, and making them available in multiple languages (1).

Through our interviews, focus groups, and research review, we learned that there are gaps in sexual health education in BC schools:

- The sexual health education curriculum is not comprehensive

- The sexual education curriculum is not consistently taught

- The curriculum doesn't have a specific gender transformation goal

- Generally, BC teachers require more comprehensive training in sexual health education, and may not be comfortable with the content area

- Students are uncomfortable with sexual health being taught by the classroom teacher and there is a strong desire for external experts to facilitate these discussions

- There is an opportunity to better integrate the physical education curriculum with the sexual health curriculum, so that healthy relationships, gender equality and gender roles concepts are incorporated into physical activity/physical literacy learning. This would be supportive of our recommendations for using physical activity as a platform within the program area

> **"We need more training; better, up-to-date resources; we need teachers to feel supported in teaching the sexual health curriculum. There also needs to be a component to empower parents to start these conversations early and to reinforce these messages, so that what our kids are learning at school isn't all they're learning."**
>
> *—Saleema Noon, Sexual Health Educator in BC, Globe and Mail February 26 2015*

health taught by external experts: It can be expensive for external expert educators to come to schools—this is often something that the PACs fund if they can afford it and if they prioritize it. Further, parental permission is often required for these "special presentations."

- There is a real shortage of resources for youth to learn about healthy sexuality and gender. There is a need for entertaining and engaging documentaries and interactive online content

- The issue of pornography and its relationship to (un)healthy sexuality and violence against women and girls is not covered in the BC curriculum, and should be included and combined with curriculum around media literacy

- The concept of sexual objectification (and hypersexualization) is missing from the BC curriculum, which does teach about sexuality in general and safe sex

> **"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."**
>
> *—Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls, 2010*

Recommendation and key activities

RECOMMENDATION 5:
Advocate for updates to curriculum that address issues of sexualization, hypermasculinization and healthy relationships. Promote media literacy in sexual health education as a tool to mitigate the impacts of sexualization.

Key Activities:

- Review provincial sexual health curriculum and identify gaps with respect to teaching about sexualization, hypermasculinity, gender norms, and pornography. Where these topics are not included, encourage provincial education bodies to build a more comprehensive sexual health curriculum, including topics of gender power balance, relationship-building, pornography, consent, sexualization and hypermasculinization.

- Identify and collect examples of relevant sexual health curriculum that would be useful in updating curriculum (e.g., the updated Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum which includes modules on consent, healthy relationships, body image, relationships and intimacy).

- Create modules that could be modified for multiple types of delivery and audiences (e.g., outside of school, for parent audiences).

- Consult and collaborate with Canadian teachers to identify strategies to support classroom teachers in consistently delivering a healthy sexuality module in classrooms. Identify and collaborate with expert sexual health educators outside of schools to create an external delivery model for this curriculum or module and explore funding strategies.

- Partner with the medical community to demonstrate the importance of learning about the influence of pornography and to advocate on a widespread basis for curriculum change.

- Explore potential avenues for reaching parents:
  - Parent Advisory Councils
  - Parenting blogs and other online resources targeted at parents
  - Community Leisure and Recreation Guides

Programs

We know from our literature review that programs to prevent violence against women and girls via reductions in sexualization of girls or hypermasculinization of boys should focus on the balance of power between the genders. The role of masculinities or hypermasculinization and the extent to which sexualization of girls exacerbates the negative consequences of hypermasculinization, are important to the consideration of interventions that aim to change social norms to address violence. Programs should work towards the redress of "deeply entrenched socially accepted practices, and normative behaviours that maintain women's and girls' inequality and tolerance of violence against women and girls" (6).

This means that recommended programming needs to work with girls, boys, men and women, to empower them to resist accepted gender roles and to create their own positive, healthy gender identities that contribute to a transformation—or equalization—of power between genders.

Summary of key findings

Violence against women and girls is influenced by societal norms about gender and power that play out at the community level. Michau et al. underlined the important role of the community in influencing and promoting gender equality and non-violence: "The goal of community-level prevention of violence against women and girls is to create an enabling environment for equality and non-violence; an environment where

a critical mass of support can grow among community members, leaders and institutions to promote gender equality and non-violence" (6). Any actions taken to reduce the extent to which sexualization of girls and hypermasculinization of boys is occurring factor into shifting social norms to promote gender equality, thereby decreasing violence.

The results of the UN's recent analysis of factors associated with men's perpetration of violence against women and girls (22) clearly showed the relationship between factors associated with the dominant definition of masculinity (i.e., gender inequitable attitudes) and increased likelihood of violence. This translates to a logical intervention (or programmatic) focus on addressing factors associated with the dominant definition of masculinity, specifically towards reducing dominance and control of women. These interventions include those that focus on social norms on gender, parenting and strengthening of women's resilience (20).

Effective interventions focused on masculinity in boys "explicitly address[ed] the norms, behaviours, and relationships associated with ideals of manhood. Such programs have been termed gender-transformative, … and most worked with both women and men, which is essential for sustained gender transformation" (20).

In a recent review, effective interventions for preventing

> **"Gender-transformative approaches… seek to transform gender norms and promote more gender-equitable relations between men and women."**
>
> *—Jewkes et al., 2015*

> **"Approaches that centre on community norm change have the potential to change versions of masculinity that promote violence. In so doing, they address power and oppression, and seek to change the mechanisms in society that support them."**
>
> *—Jewkes et al., 2015*

intimate partner violence and sexual violence among adolescents included group education, community mobilization, social norm marketing, media campaigns, mentorship and identification of safe spaces (11). Initiatives also aimed to improve gender equality in parenting by including parents and incorporating gender-equitable attitudes into team sports activities.

In the interpersonal realm, programming has aimed to change behaviour through "small-group discussions about socialization, gender, and violence, through which participants learn communication, healthy relationships and assertiveness skills" (6). There is evidence to suggest that work with both women and men, promotes non-violent norms around masculinity and less passive norms around femininity more effectively than approaches that engage only men or only women (6). This preference for involving boys and girls, and men and women in programs together was supported by both our key informant interviews, and the focus groups with youth. Interviewees also underlined the importance of small-group programming, and highlighted that much can happen at the grass-roots level. Within the interviews, we heard support for building on the YWCA's Strong Girls, Strong World program to launch a healthy masculinities program, alongside (or perhaps in combination with), the existing girls' groups.

Community-level programming to prevent violence against women and girls can emphasize improving self-efficacy or the belief in one's ability to accomplish a goal. Empowerment through improving the resilience of girls and women (through education and training) supports violence prevention (23).

Empowerment can also occur through involvement in sports and physical activity, thereby contributing to resiliency in girls and women that helps resist sexualization and makes victimization less likely. This forms the basis of one of the APA's recommendations, specifically: that school staff, parents, caregivers, community-based youth and parenting organizations, and local business and service organizations encourage extracurricular activities that help youth build positive connections with peers and self-esteem based on their abilities and character rather than on their appearance (1). In a complementary way, physical activity may also be a platform for empowering boys to learn about, develop and embrace a healthy masculine identity.

Figure 4. T-shirt by Abercombie and Fitch (A&F) in 2005. Over the years A&F received much criticism and backlash from shirts that promoted sexism. This shirt reads: "Who needs a brain when you have these?". Other sayings include: "Blondes are adored, brunettes are ignored.", "Do I make you look fat?" and "I had a nightmare I was a brunette".

"Girls themselves can protest these sexualizing images just as the girls who protested [Abercrombie & Fitch] t-shirts did. Support for these kinds of efforts can come from girls' groups, schools, families, religious institutions and especially from girls themselves."

—*Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls, 2010*

We heard through our interviews that physical activity programs based on developing physical competence in young people have an important role in values, self-esteem, fortitude and character development. Interviewees highlighted that, through physical activity, we can teach children to understand themselves and their emotions, and connect them with a trusted peer support network as well as role models.

Further rationale for targeting boys within physical

activity and sports settings is the tendency for sport to be a gendered institution, perpetuating a narrow view of masculinity. Sport reinforces masculinity and masculine behaviour as acceptable and desirable qualities (24). We see the need and opportunity to address this issue of cultivating hypermasculinity through sport by tackling the concepts of healthy masculinity and gender equality in settings where boys already are.

Further, sustainable change is more likely when programs involve a degree of self-organizing whereby community members take coordinated action on the issue at hand (6). There are many examples of programs and initiatives targeted at creating "agents of change" in individuals to affect gender norms on a larger scale. The concepts of sexualization of girls and hypermasculinization of boys appear to be particularly engaging for girls and boys, and have sometimes resulted in significant rallies around action (1).

The family or home is a setting that can influence gender transformation at the interpersonal level, through interactions with parents, siblings and others within the family unit. Parents play a significant role in building gender roles, early in a child's development (7). Ricciardelli and McCabe wrote that "although all girls are subject to many sociocultural influences, parental attitudes and behaviours are likely to be particularly influential for younger girls" (25).

The APA report noted that "parents and other adults, through co-viewing and discussion, can help young

"There's a real opportunity to look at the quality of the physical activity experience [for girls]. What are the girls going to learn? What do we want them to gain by participating? What kind of messaging are the leaders giving? We need to examine all environments where girls can be active. There's an opportunity to create a more supportive physical activity environment and deliver greater quality with a greater chance of building competence in girls. How can we be intentional and elevate girls' experiences within this opportunity? Teach what it means to be a strong, empowered girl, while learning fundamental movement skills."

—Key informant interview

minds think critically about what they see" (1). The White Ribbon Campaign recently reported on "The Involved Father and Gender Equality Project" (26), through which they explored the role of the fatherhood sector in promoting gender equality, healthy, equal relationships and ending violence against women.

The men involved indicated that the use of parental leave benefits may contribute to gender transformation so that men are more prominent in caring and

> **"Most parents are unaware of the media their boys are looking at ... When they do find out ... parents feel overwhelmed and terrified— their boys are being shaped in ways they don't understand, ... [and] they haven't built any resistance or resilience. Parents have no access to tools or resources ... [they] feel completely adrift. Parents don't know how to have conversations without shaming and blaming."**
>
> —*Key informant interview*

nurturing roles, and that more programs were needed so that fathers could connect and support each other in parenting. Importantly, fathers reported that their involvement with their children promoted gender equality through their own role modeling and conversations on equality with their children (26).

Parental programming can shift notions of masculinity and femininity through engaging in "aspirational [approaches that] involve offering a vision of a positive, equitable relationship, and how relationships like these can benefit all family members" (6). One interviewee highlighted their interest in "an engaged fatherhood program which focuses specifically on the roles of fathers in exploring consent, healthy masculinities and modeling gender equality in the home."

Interviewees highlighted that "we need to support parents to support healthy relationships in their children," and to be good models for their children. They indicated parents are "overwhelmed" in some respects (with what their daughters might be wearing, for example), but completely unaware in other respects (of the sexually-explicit media that their boys are looking at, for example).

Programming that involves parents is needed, especially given the lack of resources for them. We heard through the interviews that education on pornography, children's access to it and how it influences relationships in young people are critical components within parental programming.

The inclusion of the issue of pornography within parental education aligns well with a gender transformative approach, given the important role of pornography in the establishment of gender roles and sexual identities for young people today.

Clearly, there is a range in effective program approaches that focus on gender transformation. We believe that this focus is critical to intervening on the sexualization of girls and hypermasculinization of boys that both mediate and contribute factors to violence against women. Our program recommendations centre on the potential to use gender transformative approaches within the context that the YWCA is operating in, that build on existing programs and have promising impact at the individual, interpersonal and community levels.

Research Report: Addressing the sexualization of women and girls

Recommendations and key activities

Recommendation 6:
Use physical activity and wellness programming to empower young girls, develop physical competency and curb the impact of hypersexualizing influences.

Key Activities:

- Partner with organizations that focus on physical activity for girls with an empowerment emphasis. Assist these organizations with expanding the reach of their programs or work, sharing and incorporating best practices with respect to including girls in physical activity and wellness programming for the purposes of building competency and resilience in girls to resist sexualizing influences. These organizations may include:
    - Sole Girls (Vancouver)
    - Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS)
    - viaSPORT (British Columbia)
    - Canada Sport for Life
    - Girls Action Foundation
    - Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada
    - Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada
    - ProMOTION Plus (British Columbia)
    - Kidsport (British Columbia)
    - YWCA Youth Advisory Council
    - Provincial Sports Organizations
    - Canadian Olympic Committee

Recommendations and key activities, continued

Recommendation 7:
Use physical activity and wellness as a platform to empower boys, assist with development of healthy masculinities and curb the impact of hypermasculinizing influences.

Key Activities:

- Work with and support existing physical activity and sport programs and organizations for boys that emphasize or incorporate the development of healthy masculinity within a gender equitable approach. Support, share with, and include other sports organizations that do not currently have this emphasis, to include best practices towards healthy masculinities development, where possible. Identify and share best practices for gender transformative approaches within sport and physical activity for boys. Partnerships may include:
    - Sole Boys (Vancouver)
    - Distrikt Movement (North Vancouver)
    - viaSPORT (British Columbia)
    - Canada Sport for Life
    - Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada
    - Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada
    - Kidsport (British Columbia)
    - Provincial Sports Organizations
    - Canadian Olympic Committee
    - Canadian Paralympic Committee

Recommendation 8:
Engage parents through schools, community organizations and public awareness initiatives to educate them about healthy sexuality for all children and youth, including the influences of sexualization of girls, hypermasculinization of boys and pornography.

Key Activities:

- Define program concepts within a gender transformative approach, and identify existing programs that meet current needs for parents. Explore existing programs and determine the possibilities for modification and augmentation. Work with new partners to develop and support programming and assist with increasing reach. Prioritize including mothers and fathers in programs together. Leverage existing networks to develop and promote the program.
- Existing organizations and programs to research further may include:
    - Saleema Noon Sexual Health Educators
    - MediaSmarts

Next Steps

The purpose of this report is to provide the YWCA Metro Vancouver a suite of recommendations based on our review of the literature, interviews with experts and specialists and focus groups with youth. We were guided by the YWCA's mission to build better futures for women and their families through advocacy and integrated services that foster economic independence, wellness and equal opportunities.

The outcomes of our research are intended to inform the course of action the YWCA will take through the Culture Shift Project to begin to shift attitudes and practices that perpetuate the sexualization of women and girls and corresponding hypermasculinization of men and boys.

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