

# GIRLTALK

SUMMER 2017



**THE *BODY* ISSUE**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**LETTER FROM THE EDITORS**

*By Eunice Park and Charlotte Kramon*

**3**

**MY SEXUAL ASSAULT EXPERIENCE**

*By Anonymous*

**4-5**

**PORNOGRAPHY: DEGRADING OR EMPOWERING?**

*By Hannah Ji*

**5-7**

**ABOUT EATING DISORDERS**

*By Fiorella Murillo*

**7-8**

**ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL**

*By Alyse Rovner*

**8**

**A FIRSTHAND REFLECTION ON CATCALLING**

*By Zelda Barnz*

**9**

**MY VIEWS ON THE VICTORIA'S SECRET ANGELS**

*By Charlotte Kramon*

**10-11**

12

**DEBUNKING THE MYTHS: MY HYMEN, MY BUSINESS**

*By Sophie Dorf Kamienny*

13-14

**LIVING WITH AN EATING DISORDER**

*By Anonymous*

15-16

**AT WHAT AGE DOES OBJECTIFICATION BEGIN?**

*By Charlotte Kramon*

17

**COLLAGE**

*By Carly Ross*



# WELCOME TO GIRLTALK

## *Dear Readers,*

Welcome to the second issue of the Girl Talk Magazine! The Body Issue explores the connotations and current issues revolving around the female body. Inside, you will find a wide variety of articles and art. Students from different high schools across America have contributed, either publicly or anonymously, their opinions, research, advocacy, and art to the second Girl Talk Magazine.

Centering around the female body, articles feature personal stories about sexual assault and eating disorders, critical discussions about the future of pornography and consent, the glorification of Victoria's Secret models, critiques of one size fits all policies, and more. Visual interpretations of the female body, ranging from paintings to mosaics, are displayed as well. As a warning, some articles in The Body Issue contain sensitive and potentially triggering material, which include sexual assault depictions and violence against women. As an organization who strives to tackle a wide range of gender topics, our second issue does not shy away from controversial, yet important discussions about female sexuality and gender. Lifting different voices, the Girl Talk brings forward the diversity of female experiences around the globe. We hope that as readers, you will keep an open mind, and use Girl Talk as a space to be educated, inspired, and challenged.

As always, we would love to hear your responses to our work. With our expanding staff and support, we welcome any feedback or questions about becoming more involved with the Girl Talk Magazine. To submit articles, feedback, thoughts, and ideas, email us at [Girltalkmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:Girltalkmagazine@gmail.com), or feel free to contact us through our instagram and facebook.

*- Eunice and Charlotte, Editors in Chief*



# MY SEXUAL ASSAULT EXPERIENCE

*by Anonymous*

## **TRIGGER WARNING:**

The following article depicts instances of sexual assault.

**T**he scene of my sexual assault wasn't picture perfect nor movie worthy. Violence against women sells, but it hardly looked like that during my night. I wasn't shrieking on the top of my lungs, nor was I thrashing to escape his clasp.

**M**y pleas sputtered out in whispers, trembling with the weight of its significance. The first time I mumbled no, I meant for him to stop touching my body immediately. About the hundredth time I whispered it, I just hoped he would finish fast. I lay there as his sacrifice, silently praying and completely

immobile.

**W**hen it finally ended, he asked me if I was okay, and I said *Yes*.

I said yes because I wasn't ready. I wasn't ready with him, nor was I ready with myself to admit that I was sexually assaulted. Living in a culture that saw sexual assault victims as "damaged goods" and profited off the consumption and objectification of women's bodies, I desperately didn't want to be another statistic, another *victim*.

**O**nce people started uncovering my sexual assault experience, the label of victim was branded on my forehead,

giving others permission to victimize me again. Eventually, I mustered enough courage to speak with the authorities about the incident.

**A**t first the questions were harmless. When did it happen? Where did it happen? But then they progressed to: What were you wearing? Wasn't he your friend? to questions that weren't really questions at all, just statements laced with fake curiosity and pity of another girl who just "regretted her experience and cried rape".

**A**t school, my experience wasn't any different. I was "used" and "weird", and the one word that hurt me the

most, was that I was “easy”.

It's been a year since my sexual assault, but I'm still constantly reminded of it every day. Some instances are more obvious. Sometimes, I wake up in a cold sweat because of nightmares I have of it, and sometimes, I hear about him. But most commonly, I get reminded of the experience with instances that don't have anything to do with him.

It was the time my religious school launched a sexist dress code policy, that body shamed girls to dress more “modestly” to not distract the boys.

It was the time, or every single time, that my school hosts a feminist meeting and there is at most one male in the room out of all the hundreds of people at my large public school.

It was the time I overheard a boy stating “I never really liked her, she was honestly a bitch anyways,” in response to being rejected by a girl.

It was every single news story that advertised rapists getting off on light sentences, and the comments of sympathy that trailed behind each condemnation.

It was our President, whose infamous words “grab her by the pussy” was met with uncomfortable laughs and justifications that “boys will be boys”.

Boys will be boys, words are just words, and in fact, women must secretly like it anyways. It was every single time that served as a reminder that rape culture is *not only existent*, but *encouraged* in our society.

The first step to solving any problem is recognition. After a year of hating myself and blaming myself, what I have ultimately recognized is that I am a *survivor*, not a victim. All I ask for you to do is -

Please recognize the problem.

Rape culture is real. It's undeniable, and present in interactions and events around us every single day.

For the men who feel entitled to women's bodies, for the women who slut shame others because of a system that pits us against each other, and for everyone else who contributes to the problem - this article will probably not change you.

To you, I will just be another “angry feminist”, and you will keep making tasteless jokes and solidifying sexist systems.

If you're a male, it won't be until something terrible happens to *your* mother, *your* sister, or *your* girlfriend, to realize

that you should be a feminist.

It's depressing, yet understandable, that half of the population will never truly comprehend the inequality women endure and never truly recognize the rape culture of objectification and sexualization women face. And yes, men do have problems too, and yes, men can be raped too.

No one is denying the facts, but one clear fact is that although it is absolutely terrible that some men have been sexually assaulted, all men do not grow up in society as objectified, sexualized, and shamed to the same extent as women.

All I ask for you is to try.

Try going to *one* feminist meeting at your school. Try listening, without preconceived notions and biases, to your female friends who speak about their experiences. Try stopping yourself from judging women for their clothing preferences or sexual habits. Try pointing out that crude, sexist statements, even said in the safety net of a group of boys, is not okay.

There a million things you can do, but one thing that truly matters is that you recognize the problem, and try.

## PORNOGRAPHY: DEGRADING OR EMPOWERING?

by *Hannah Ji* (OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL)

### READER DISCRETION ADVISED:

The following article discusses sensitive content that may be NSFW.

Pornography makes up 12% of the content on the internet and 35% of the media downloaded from the internet, yet it is rarely talked about let alone discussed. The importance of talking about pornography only grows stronger as access to it gets easier everyday and as

technology and media expands.

Today, pornography is easily distributed and accessed through any digital device that can connect to the internet. According to a study published in the Journal of Adolescent Research and Archives of Sexual Behavior called “Generation XXX,” 9 out of 10 young adult

males were reported to use pornography and 1 out of 3 women reported doing the same.

Furthermore, 50% of young men reported to watch pornography weekly in contrast to the 3.2% of women who reported of doing the same. These statistics confirm the male dominated sphere of pornography.

Much of the videos produced online adjusts to the male perspective and wants. This leads to the large concern brought up by mostly feminists and women, that the depictions of forceful and non-consensual sex in porn leads to real life violence towards women.

A famous line by feminist Robin Morgan is, “Pornography is the theory, and rape is the practice”. Although a generalization of porn, it's

not hard to see where these opinions stem from. A 2010 study by Gail Dines, “Pornography: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality”, found that 88% of online pornographic videos showed violence against women.

It is not an uncommon statement to say that porn is violent. Many subtopics or categories in major porn sites include “rape”, “forceful”, etc. Most porn portrays women as sex-obsessed, mindless objects that are both promiscuous and subordinate. However, to categorize all porn as bad or anti-feminist is an almost dangerous overgeneralization of all porn. I will get to all that later on in this article, but first, it’s important to point out some of the downfalls of pornography.

Being a heavily male viewer dominated world, the videos produced are catered towards heterosexual men. Thus, women oftentimes are the objects portrayed in the videos.

As more and more content becomes accessible online, the pressure for newer, more scandalous content increases. Porn industries are always looking for ways to produce videos that differentiate themselves from the millions of clips that’s already available.

This “raising of the bar” translates to extreme depictions of sex, especially through violence and physical challenge. Many studies go as far as to connect causation between violent pornography and real life sexual assault.

Although there are multiple studies that connect this increase in violence to real world aggression, there is also the component of rape culture. As the ever-increasing ubiquity of pornography becomes more normalized into everyday culture, so is the violence depicted in porn.

The videos in which women are raped into submission are not uncommon. A study done by Rape Crisis South London showed that when they googled “rape porn”, 86 percent of sites that came up advertised videos depicting the rape of women under the age of 18, 75 percent of sites involved guns or knives, 43 percent showed the woman

drugged, and 46 percent were billed as incest rape.

These videos not only perpetuate ideas of male dominance and female inferiority, but also encourage male aggression and the dehumanization of women. With that, the videos send a devastating message on consent and safety.

With the expanding technology, porn has been recently taken to the next level with virtual reality. The lines between reality and fantasy are more blurred as users now experience rather than watch. Although VR is just another addition to the porn industry’s methods of creating new experiences, it becomes a slippery slope when that statement comes from an industry that reinforces the sexual exploitation of women.

When people view the videos in which “they” are engaging in rape scenarios, are they ethically held accountable for their actions? If they create VR versions of real life people and commit actions that would not be consented to in real life, is this a violation of some sort?

The key component in answering these questions is analyzing the role of the users. They are not only viewers anymore, but rather participants that become the “actor” that may be

involved in a rape fantasy. The technology is progressing much faster than the discussion and legal debate over the consequences of VR porn.

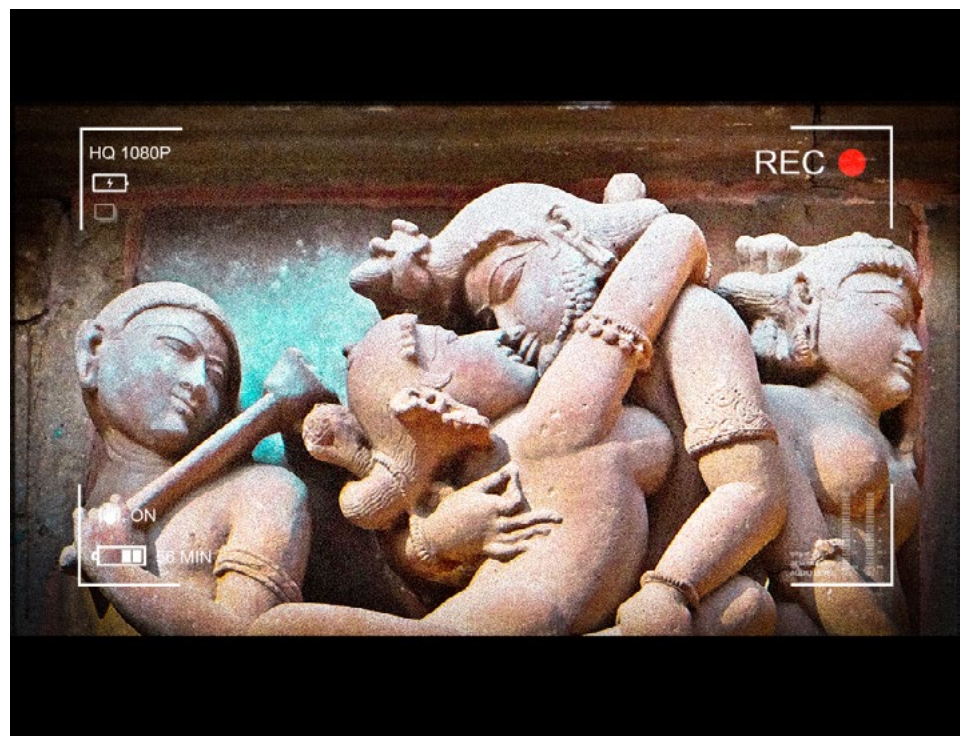
Ultimately, it is up to the user to be aware of what they are doing until more formal and legal debate catches up.

Although there is much content surrounding forceful situations, generalizing statements that all porn is violent is an oversimplification of porn and also a lack of nuanced understanding of it as well.

Citing back to the earlier statistic introduced on how 88% of online pornography depicts violence against women, many of the studies don’t take into consideration consensual BDSM [Bondage and Discipline; Sadism and Masochism; Dominance and Submission].

Take into consideration phenomena of Fifty Shades of Grey; a dominant man seduces a submissive woman with chains and whips and yet women and men all across the country raced to read and watch the storyline unfold. There is much stigma surrounding BDSM; opposers often call it dehumanizing, degrading, or abusive. However, much of the stigma comes from a misconception surrounding the culture.

Despite appearances, in a safe consensual scenario of BDSM, the submis-



sive role actually has the most power. They are in complete control of whatever action is done to them and are always setting the limits.

The dominant role, although giving off an aggressive appearance, always maintains care and attentiveness to their partner. To both partners, the “pain” that is inflicted is a form of pleasure and is always catered to the parties involved. Much of the “pain” that is seen in these videos is more often theatrics as well.

It’s important to understand the culture surrounding certain types of pornography, such as BDSM, because the violence that is depicted isn’t always what people assume it may be.

**M**any anti-pornographist make the causation claim between forceful pornography and real world sexual assault and rape. Yes, much of the rape fantasies portrayed do eroticize sexual assault and rape; however many of the studies conflate correlation with causation.

A Copenhagen study investigated the links between exposure to pornography and sexist aggressive attitudes.

They came to the conclusion that there is no definite trend amongst exposure to pornography and attitude trends.

It mostly came down to personality traits that determined future attitudes towards women after exposure to pornography. There was an increase in sexism and aggressive attitudes for mostly those with already disagreeable personality traits beforehand.

So, to claim that pornography causes rape is an overblown statement, but that is not meant to downplay any of the rape culture that is reinforced by certain types of pornography. Some researchers also make the claim that porn is an outlet for people to express their aggressive sexual fantasies, so it becomes a preventative mechanism.

When porn distribution was legalized in Denmark in the 1970s, there was an overall decrease in the trend of sexual assault. Still, there is a lack of clear causation, but it does show doubt between the claims of many anti-porn advocates.

**T**here is still large debate about pornography today on whether or not

it is acceptable, morally just, positive or negative in terms of its impacts on social and personal lives. A large part of the burden falls onto the viewer and how they interpret what they are seeing on the screen.

In most pornographic videos, the actors involved have already consented beforehand and have respect for all parties involved. This does not always show up on the actual final product which can skew how the viewer oftentimes think sex in real life works.

**T**here is a large disconnect between differentiation what is acceptable in the real world and what is not. The more open the conversation becomes on porn, the better people can be equipped to understanding that the violence that they see on screen is not necessarily real and that consent is involved.

It’s understanding why the topic of porn isn’t openly discussed, but it should be a higher priority to analyzing the sexual roles pornography plays in order to deter the rape culture that stems from it rather than our own initial discomfort.

## ABOUT EATING DISORDERS

*by Fiorella Murillo (OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL)*

**E**ating disorders are not talked about often because over the years they have become a taboo of some sort. They often carry with them a sense of shame, regret, and disappointment, all often expressed by the people surrounding the person that is actually sick.

Eating disorders are any range of psychological disorders characterized by disturbed or abnormal eating habits. This definition is especially important because it acknowledges that eating disorders don’t only cause a person not to eat, but it could also cause them to eat way too much hence “abnormal eating

habits”.

Up until about a couple years ago, it was thought that eating disorders were caused by external factors such as cultural pressure and parents, and although it was known that eating disorders could be hereditary, the scientific aspect of it hadn’t been explored until very recently.

This is not to say that culture has absolutely no influence on a person’s eating habits or why a person develops an eating disorder, there’s just more to that story than what is being or is not being talked about.

**T**he American Psychological Association (APA), talks about a study

conducted where they found out that the brain in a female\* anorexic has less active brain circuits when they win and more active brain circuits when they lose. In the brain of a bulimic female, there is a “weaker than normal” response in brain regions associated with the reward system regarding dopamine.

There is a theory regarding anorexia that states that the person’s anorexia is used as a coping mechanism against their heightened senses. (In other words, they can hear their bodies working because they are hypersensitive to any change in their internal bodies).

There is another eating disorder,



which is actually the most common eating disorder in the United States and also the least acknowledged as an actual eating disorder. There has always been such a negative connotation to being overweight or obese because it has always been said that it's not something that you can't control even though it is for many people.

This eating disorder consists of hours of bingeing on an overall larger than normal amount of food and afterwards often feeling guilt of shame for it.

I know that our generation is constantly trying to let people that are not as thin know that they are accepted, but they continue to yell out your body

weight and body fat percentage in class and although they may not know it. I know quite a few people, including myself, that don't want their weight or body fat percentage a commonly known fact.

In my opinion, as long as you are healthy overall, I don't care what you look like or what other people think. Eating disorders need to stop being romanticized or advertised in a catch up with the celebrity magazines.

They need to start being explained and given the important attention they deserve in scientific magazines that can help the people who suffer from this horrible mental illness.

These mental illnesses all affect the body in a completely different way but they are both ultimately fatal and more and more young people will keep dying from this disease if it continues to be ignored as serious as this illness really is.

*Note: Most research on eating disorders are based on women because they are more common in females but they happen to males as well and the male fatality rate is higher because they are usually diagnosed very late into the illness.*

*Sources: National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA), American Psychological Association (APA), Mayo Clinic*

# ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

by *Alyse Rovner* (OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL)

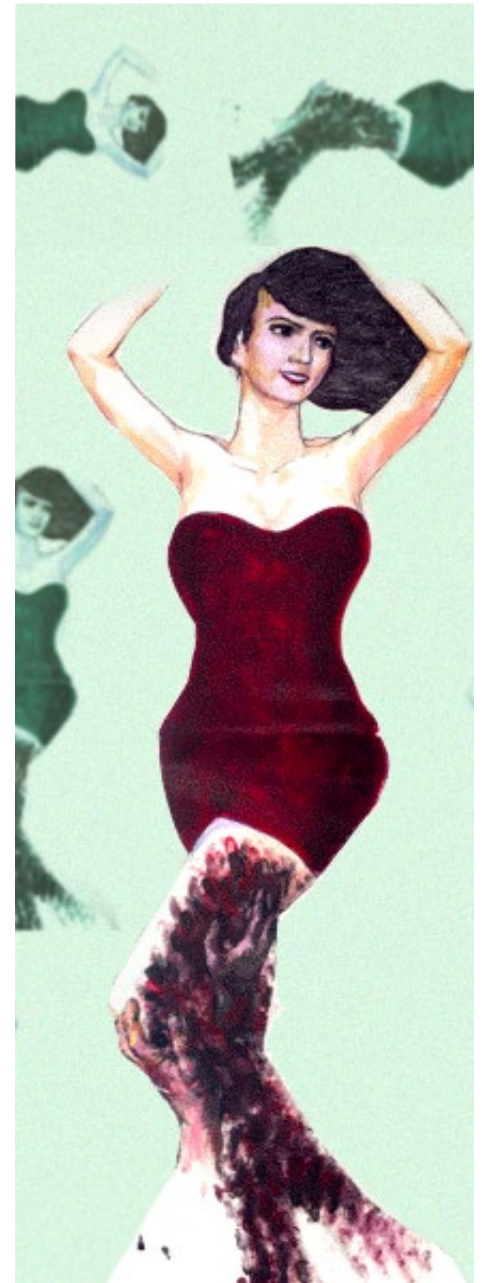
I would like to address the term "one size fits all", which seems to be very popular in women's clothing. One store in particular, loves and embraces the 'one size fits all' mentality, Brandy Melville. Brandy Melville uses an 'one size fits all' sizing system, when in reality its clothing targets women a size 2-6, instead of all women.

This sizing system caters towards the ideal body standards for women instead of living up to its actual meaning of fitting all people.

This creates a biased system of body standards and body image, where it's so difficult to live up to what should be the perfect body. By sizing clothing on the basis that it should be able to fit everyone; it makes people who aren't able to fit into Brandy's clothing feel insecure and inferior. It makes women feel unworthy and abnormal, because they should be able to fit into their clothing if it's marketed as 'one size fits all'. In my personal experience at Brandy Melville, there are maybe 5 things in their inventory that might fit me properly and look good on my body and that is being nice. I have been that person in a fitting room who feels upset and thinks that I might be the problem that these clothes don't fit.

This was a rude awakening for me as middle school started and I wanted to fit in with the rest of my classmates, who were able to wear these clothes. For a while I felt that I was abnormal and did not understand why they would say "one size fits all", if it didn't fit me. The average size of a women in the US, is a size 16, yet Brandy Melville only catered to a minuscule population of Americans that fit that ideal body. After talking to more people, I realized I wasn't the only one feeling that way.

I stopped shopping at Brandy Melville, and have decided to not buy clothing at a place that discourages body inclusivity. I encourage all of you to think twice when shopping at stores that embraces an 'one size fits all' mentality, and question whether the exclusivity it promotes, is worth a cute T-shirt.



# A FIRSTHAND REFLECTION ON CATCALLING

by *Zelda Barnz* (OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL)

I am walking down the sidewalk in a small neighborhood by the beach, summer of 2015. I'm alone, wearing a bikini top and denim shorts, my ghostly pale skin covered in sunscreen. A man in a red convertible with a receding hairline pulls up to the stop sign at the corner, and despite his generic douchebag aura (and my right of way), I pause and wave at him to keep driving. He doesn't; instead he looks me up and down, whistles, and says something along the lines of "Looking good. Do you want a ride?" I fight the urge to gag and reply evenly, "Sorry, I'm not into fat guys."

We collectively flip each other off as he drives away. His license plate has a woman's name on it, so either he has a girlfriend (ew) or he named his car (double ew). There was no ring on the finger beside his middle (which he'd chosen to extend). I decide he's the type of rolex-wearing idiot who would name his car, and it's unlikely he has a girlfriend with pick up lines like that.

Besides, if he did have a girlfriend he might be somewhat less inclined to hit on fourteen year olds. Should I have insulted him as a response? No. I'll admit, that was not a good decision.

If someone makes a remark like that, no matter how revolting, ignore them. It's for your safety-- you could get caught up in a very dangerous situation

if you provoke catcallers. In this situation, I figured a man who named his car wouldn't leave it in the middle of the street to attack a girl who called him fat. But I should have just walked away.

Catcalling happens. It's one of the most prominent, yet subtle forms of misogyny in day to day life--every young woman faces it at some point, especially on the streets of populated cities. Most men think it isn't a problem. The men who actually catcall women on a day to day basis often think (or claim to think) it's flattering. Some women even find it complimentary. To these women: there's no judgement, but hearing a random stranger tell you your ass is thick should not boost your self confidence. A catcall is never a compliment. They are attempts to objectify a woman's body, as well as alienate and dehumanize people. And it's scary.

Statistics state that ninety percent of rape victims are female-- yes, boys get raped too, and that's absolutely a valid issue. However, one in thirty three men will be the victim of sexual assault in their life; one in every six women in the United States will be a victim of attempted or completed rape. As a young woman living in the U.S., forgive me for being afraid that a catcall could cross the line to assault. By comparison, it's clear that women have to take further precautionary measures than men.

Quite a few people tend to miss the distinctions between a compliment and harassment. Typically speaking, if a man one has never met before likes their outfit and wants to genuinely compliment them, he should smile and tell them while making eye contact. He wouldn't be yelling it across the street and asking a woman to turn around and smile at him if his intentions were merely to be kind. Catcalls are not flattering.

Commonly used terms by cat-callers include "whore", "slut", etcetera. Often comments by harassers will seem directed at the clothes the victim is wearing. Clothing has nothing to do with it.

Whether the victim is wearing a tank top and shorts or a winter coat, the "compliments" will not decrease in the slightest. Because the words aren't really about you or your body-- they're about control. These men want control over women, and the only way their negligible brains can think to obtain it is by shouting at them and trying to drill demeaning phrases into their heads.

I know from firsthand experience how difficult it is to just ignore these harmful words. But ultimately, your safety is more important than their reaction. Catcalling is awful and a very significant issue, but there are ways to stand up against it without putting yourself in harm's way.



# MY VIEWS ON THE VICTORIA'S SECRET ANGELS

by *Charlotte Kramon* (OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL)

There are feminists who would label shows like the Victoria's Secret Fashion show as empowering, with women strutting confidently down the runway in lingerie, celebrating their sexuality.

Others see the show as "putting conventionally attractive women onstage and using them as physical representations of sex in order to sell bras isn't exactly a manifestation of the feminist dream," as columnist Jill Filipovic wrote in *Cosmopolitan*.

To be completely honest, many would say I'm probably not the person who should be writing a critical article about the harms of shows and campaigns like those from Victoria's Secret.

I love the Victoria's Secret angels. I follow many of their social medias, and when I see Josephine Skriver, my favorite model, in all the Urban Outfitters ads in their stores, I want to buy whatever it is she's wearing. But then again, maybe my interest in the modeling world is exactly what makes me suited to write this. I understand why people are so intrigued by supermodels, and can write from that perspective.

Those who say that the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show is a form of sexual "empowerment" claim that women want to be sexy, and the show allows them to take control of their sexuality.

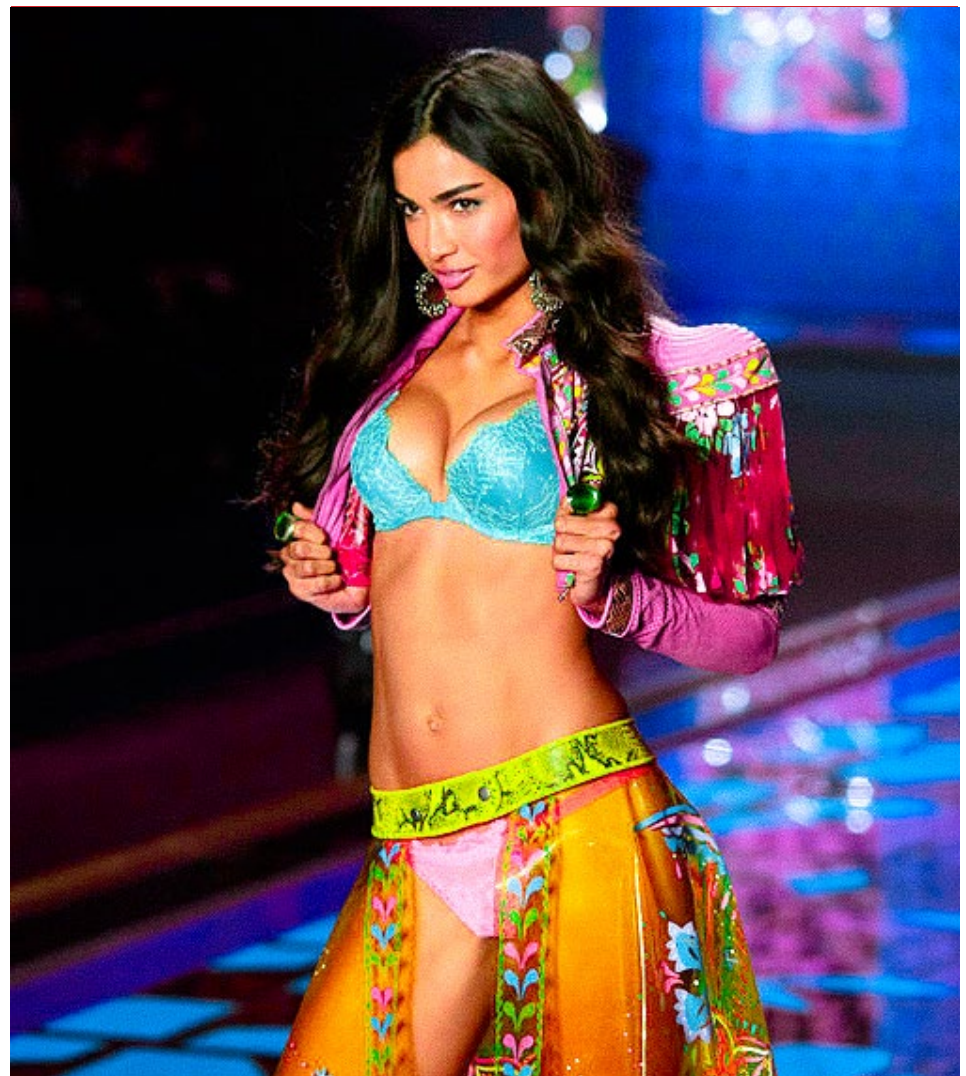
In his BBC series and books *Ways of Seeing*, film critic John Berger notices that men are subjects, and women's bod-

ies are objects representing sexy things for men to look at and enjoy. When women are portrayed as objects, they begin to see themselves as objects.

Nothing about any of this is "empowering," a word commonly thrown around with modern feminism and is used by some as a description of models strutting down the runway.

The show and other similar shows instigate the message that female sexuality is about being perceived as sexy, Berger continue. This brings us to the idea that women can be sexy, but not sexual. They're "angels," innocent as ever, there for visual enjoyment and pleasure.

Some say the show normalizes sexuality in a positive way. As Filipovic puts it, "Trying to be sexy isn't actually tied to better sex; young women who self-sexualize tend to engage in riskier sex and show less interest in their own physical enjoyment of sex."



A task force of the American Psychological Association conducted a comprehensive review of studies on sexuality and adolescent development. The review showed that girls begin to self-sexualize at a young age, and assume their value is based on how sexy they look.

Needless to say, this is problematic when it comes to self-esteem and academic performance. Magazines and media tell young girls that there is one conventional definition of “beauty” or “sexy” followed by the models thrown in their faces.

Ashley Graham, outspoken plus-sized model, rose to fame because she didn't adhere to the conventional definition of a beautiful body. A lingerie commercial she was featured in was banned from a TV-show because it was said to be inappropriate for families. That on it's own is understandable

The problem was that a Victoria's Secret commercial containing the angels in far more skimpier and sexual poses than Ashley's was approved and shown for the same TV show.

Ashley was accused of being overly sexual merely because her body took up more space. That's another flaw in the modeling industry surrounding the concept of sexuality: It's ok and even empowering for women with skinny bodies to be sexy, but larger bodies automatically make women too sexual.

We know there is a massive problem in the modeling world. People are aware that commercials tend to depict one unattainable and ideal body type. It isn't difficult to come to the conclusion that self-sexualizing and objectification is a result of many fashion shows.

Yet, 6.5 million people, including myself, excitedly tune into the VS Fashion show. I love watching all my favorite models, such as Josephine Skriver, Jasmine Tookes, Elsa Hosk, Martha Hunt, Sara Sampaio, and Alessandra

Ambrosio walk down the runway perpetrating unrealistic standards of beauty.

If the rhetoric of these shows makes women feel inadequate and people are aware of the potential harm, why do people support this aspect of the industry?

In thinking about this question, I asked myself why I favor certain models. My favorite models are Angels like Josephine Skriver and Elsa Hosk rather than Gigi or Bella Hadid or Hailey Baldwin. The later models feel neither personable nor relatable. I admire their confidence,



but Josephine Skriver is my favorite because I love her bubbly personality and positivity. She has this relatable aura to her. She smiles far more than other models, and on a psychological level, I think the fact that someone can relate to what society tells them is perfection is comforting and intriguing.

A part of the reason why millions of people love models like the VS Angels such as Gigi and Bella and other models like Hailey Baldwin is because they embody everything a woman is told she

should be.

They are beautiful women often with sweet, happy, confident personalities that seem to be satisfied with themselves. When people see something or someone so ideal and close to perfection, a guilty part of them becomes fascinated with this perfection. It's a psychological trap.

Journalist Julie Bogen described in a Refinery article struggle with the VS Fashion Show. She wrote, “My boyfriend calmly pointed out to me and my conflicting attitudes that looking at attractive people is objectively enjoyable. It's one big, beautiful party, and that's why my friends were able to participate in the extravaganza without thinking about guilt and feminist opinions. The VS Fashion Show is fun, and that's just objectively true.”

I do believe it's important for women to support each other and lift each other up. I don't intend to shame any of the VS Angels, and I would be lying if I said I didn't admire many of them. Maybe that last sentence just defeated the purpose of this entire article, but there is nothing wrong with conflict or struggle.

While I am critical of the culture promoted by the VS Fashion Show and the modeling industry in general, I understand why I people ignore the apparent flaws in these shows. It is human nature to be fascinated with what we are told is perfection, and it is human nature to want to be “sexy” and accepted by the those

we are attracted to. But, there is nothing “empowering” in media exacerbating unattainable standards of beauty, and I hope to see some sort of change in the future. I'll probably tune in to the VS Fashion Show next year.

I'll scroll through my instagram feed and see a VS Angel's post and I'll probably like it. Nevertheless, I invite people to struggle through conflicting and controversial attitudes surrounding the Victoria's Secret Fashion Shows and the rest of the modeling industry.

# DEBUNKING THE MYTHS: MY HYMEN, MY BUSINESS

by Sophie Dorf-Kamienny (MARLBOROUGH SCHOOL)

**I**magine if every time a woman said “I do” she was agreeing to a physical invasion of her human rights and dignity simply because of the sex she was born into.

In several parts of the world, now and throughout history, women have been subjected to inaccurate and degrading virginity tests upon their wedding nights which are used to judge whether or not they are “pure wives.” In other words, virginity testing is used to assure that a new bride has not had premarital sex.

The tests common in countries such as India, Turkey, Afghanistan, Egypt, Libya, Jordan, Indonesia and South Africa are based upon a component of the female genitalia called the hymen.

Virtually all females are born with at least some of this membrane in the opening of their vaginal canal.

Myths dictate that the bleeding that (not always) occurs during a woman’s first time experiencing intercourse is a visual sign of the perforation of the male sex organ into the hymen.

Therefore, some cultures take blood on the sheets as a sign that a woman has just ended her era of virginity. The family may enter the bedroom the next morning and examine the sheets, or the bride or groom might bring the sheets out of the room to show the parents.

Other gruesome tests involve an often painful medical examination by the name of the “two-finger test,” during which a doctor may use their fingers to feel for a perforated hymen.

Virginity is so valued in some families that a groom feels the need to divorce his wife immediately upon discovering that she is not a virgin.

While you may already be shudder-

ing at the sheer violation involved in these practices, believe me, it gets even worse.

The scientific truth is that *the results of these tests and rituals mean nothing*. That’s right, a virgin woman may be embarrassed, shamed, disowned, and harshly punished because of something (perfectly acceptable) that she didn’t even do.

**Beyond the unreliability of hymen testing, many ethical and moral issues rise to the surface regarding this topic. On it’s own, the fact that women are held to such ridiculous standards and punished for not obeying them is appalling.**

Allow me to explain: have you ever ridden a horse, participated in intense exercise, or even just used a tampon? Well, guess what—all of these activities can result in the tearing and stretching of the hymen membrane.

It’s possible that a woman’s hymen may not break upon intercourse simply because it has already worn down during prior years, or because she was born with a hymen that had a larger opening than usual.

If you had a completely closed hymen (called an imperforate hymen), you would not be able to menstruate properly, and it is likely that you would eventually require medical attention. This just goes to show that, in fact, most healthy females do not have a completely sealed hymen membrane.

Additionally, a virgin with an intact hymen may not bleed during sex because her hymen is flexible enough to

stretch without tearing.

The inaccuracies of these tests work the other way around, too. For example, according to the beliefs of the individual, sometimes being a virgin doesn’t just mean that you’ve never had penis to vagina sex.

Other forms of intercourse (such as oral and anal) don’t include the vagina, and cannot be detected by examining the state of the hymen. Therefore, those who have experienced different types of sex other than penile/vaginal penetration may still be able to escape the consequences that exist in some cultures by avoiding a certain type of intercourse.

Beyond the unreliability of hymen testing, many ethical and moral issues rise to the surface regarding this topic. On it’s own, the fact that women are held to such ridiculous standards and punished for not obeying them is appalling.

Women clearly are not choosing to be tested just for their own benefit. The concept of female virginity testing is an obvious example of an action done solely to satisfy societal expectations and the patriarchy, and to make it even worse, it is an action done frequently without choice.

Men and boys, on the other hand, are not subjected to such scrutiny. In fact, particularly in American culture, they are often applauded or praised for having a wide range of premarital partners.

Virginity testing continually oppresses many female populations worldwide by invasively assuring that a woman is “good enough” for a marriage. The history of a woman’s body and the choices she makes for herself should be neither investigated nor judged by anyone else.

# LIVING WITH AN EATING DISORDER

*by Anonymous*

A few weeks ago, at night, I had ice cream. I was traveling, and the state I was in had fantastic ice cream. I got chocolate cheesecake ice cream with hot fudge on top in a kid's size.

I enjoyed it at the time. It was the first time I had ice cream in well over two months. As someone recovering from an eating disorder, eating ice cream is a very difficult thing to do. As soon as I threw away the cup and the bit of ice cream I left in there, I started feeling gross and guilty. I made plans to calorie restrict the next day, and then right after changed my mind and made plans to let myself have a cheat day because I needed one so badly.

I went back and forward between these two options for a long time, and it was all I could think about. I was going in circles, and examining my stomach for potential bloat every time I walked by a window I could see my reflection in. I could barely focus on the beautiful streets my friends and I were exploring.

I definitely calorie restricted the day after ice cream. I had a much smaller breakfast than usual, and a lunch consisting of a bit of salad (without dressing, so it was essentially lettuce) some beans, a bit of rice, and an apple. I felt accomplished, making up for my cheat the previous night.

Later that day, I urgently started snacking on nuts and fruit. I was super hungry and having intense cravings. I needed bread. I wanted pizza. I'll probably have some tonight, I thought. I wanted to go to starbucks and gobble up 5 muffins. It was a scary feeling.

I am not anorexic nor am I bulimic. I never had any intention of

calorie restriction when I actually had my disorder, and I still generally avoid counting calories. In fact, I had no idea I had an eating disorder during the bulk of it and had no idea how unhealthy my diet was, especially for a growing teenage girl. Only three of my friends are aware of what I went through, and two of them don't go to school with me. Those friends knew because I told them, and only one of them previously noticed something was off. The other two didn't see it coming.

I was always petite, and I was certainly never fat. I remember in sixth grade having friends who would always comment on how skinny I was. I barely knew what the words "eating disorder" or "anorexic" meant and didn't pay attention to body image or being skinny at all. My family eats healthier than most, but overall I just have a fast metabolism. This spring, I knew that in the back of my head, but the little bit of baby fat on my stomach messed with my brain.

For the last few years, I had been working out on and off and had always been a bit insecure. I became serious about changing my body this past spring. I would buy really unhealthy snacks at school and felt unable to control my food intake in general, and didn't feel great. I remember one day, my friends and I were feeling each others' abs. My stomach was squishier than all of theirs, and it felt awful.

Instead of trying to eat healthier and learn to moderate myself so that I'd be satisfied rather than overly stuffed, I became falsely convinced I was fat, and was determined to change that. I literally said to myself, "I am going to develop an eating disorder." I was traveling during this time, and I tried to make myself throw up a few times. (It



didn't work.)

When I got home, I decided to try a diet that certainly wasn't meant for growing 15-year-old girls, especially those who were late to puberty and periods like I was.

During the month of this diet, food was literally all I ever thought about. I would repeatedly plan out what I was going to eat and when. I thought I was happy and I thought I felt good,

and I truly thought I was eating enough. In reality, I was miserable and my body was dying little by little from the lack of nutrients.

My friends had no idea what I was going through, and most of them still have no idea what I went through. That's not because their bad friends. They're amazing people who I'm so lucky to have. You never know what people are suffering from. Eating disorders are more common than one might assume and come in many forms.

I felt weirdly lonely, isolated, and disconnected from my friends but I wasn't sure why. Now, of course, I

know my extreme lethargy was because of my diet. My mom knew the way I was eating wasn't right, and decided to have me see a specialist.

and that these symptoms were problematic. What I wasn't aware of was how severe my issue was.

I thought I was seeing a nutritionist who would write me a meal plan for fitness purposes or whatever like I saw all the fitness youtubers do.

My excessive fitness video watching is a whole other story. When I got to the office, though, I found out she was an eating disorder specialist, and was there to help me "recover," a word that wasn't on my radar at all.

I complained to my mom that I didn't need to see her because I didn't have an eating disorder or any problem at all. I truly didn't think I had a problem. That night, I had my favorite macaroni and cheese, my first processed food in a month. I didn't finish it, but it tasted delicious. This was a really big deal for me. I was proud.

Fast forward a bit, I came to terms with the fact that I have a problem. I'm not going to go too deeply into science, but my body was in a state called ketosis, meaning that I wasn't getting enough carbs. My diet was so poor that my body was starting to use my muscle tissue as food. The psychological part was a massive issue as well that I'm still working on with my nutritionist and therapist.

I've been adding much more

healthy calories and carbs to my diet, and my lethargy, depression, and isolation has gone

away.

After just a week of eating more carbs and calories, I began to feel more like my happy, social self again.

My story isn't over yet. I've been traveling for a couple weeks now, and I've allowed myself to eat a lot of sweets and bread. Because of my daily indulgence, my abs aren't as defined as they were before and I've been frustrated with that.

Each time I'd eat something unhealthy, the more I'd crave similar food and the more upset with myself I'd get. Although I enjoy the treat, I get into this panicked mental state after. The day before yesterday I had a really difficult day, and tried to make myself throw up three times, but I couldn't figure out how to do it.

Overall, though, I'm proud of allowing myself to indulge a bit. I'm on the path to recovering, and I'm doing a good job being less obsessive.

I want to be strong, not weak. I don't want to only think about food all day. I will continue to eat healthy, because I feel good that way and have always felt good that way, but I am on my way to accepting that the occasional sweet won't hurt me.

I wanted to share my story for a few reasons. First of all, diets and eating disorders aren't worth it. Having whatever one defines as a "good body" will make you happy for literally a split second and the rest of it will be misery and stress.

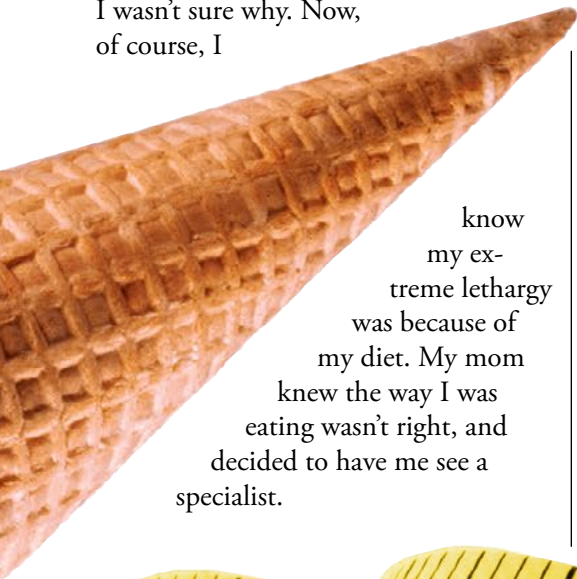
Trust me. It's important to be healthy, not skinny. If you are considering any form of diet for the sake of weight loss, I beg you to reconsider. You never know what you deem a simple diet will lead to.

Second, I wanted people to be aware of the fact that eating disorders don't necessarily mean that you could see bones because eating anything

people's they weren't eating anything at all. Like I said, people didn't know I had this disorder. You never know what people are going through, and you never know what you yourself are susceptible to.

Coincidentally, I saw her on the final day of my one month diet.

I hadn't weighed myself during this month, but I figured I should before I saw the nutritionist. When I went to weigh myself, I saw that I had lost 10 pounds. I also hadn't had my period in 4 months. I knew I had to gain weight,



# AT WHAT AGE DOES OBJECTIFICATION BEGIN?

by Charlotte Kramon (OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL)

**G**irls are becoming subjects of sexual taunts and bullying at seemingly younger ages than most people assume.

Girlguiding UK, one of the biggest girl's youth organization in the country, conducted a report surveying about 1,300 girls, with seven being the youngest age. Not only did 75% of the girls admitted to suffering from sexual harassment, but the 75% of girls ages 11-21 say sexism affects their self-esteem and motivation to be successful in their futures. Where does this all occur?

*School.*

Most of the sexual "jokes," taunting, catcalling, and and undesired, superfluous sexual attention occurs in schools, a place parents think of as the least of their worries. Sexual harassment seems to be starting dangerously early and could be paving the way to a problematic culture.

I asked girls ages 11-12 about sexual taunts and harassment. Their names have been changed for their privacy from classmates.

First, the girls addressed name calling. There is a growing problem with people calling each other "whores." Annabella\* said, "These kids make jokes constantly like, 'Oh my god, you're such a whore.'" Another said they use it "out of context." "A lot of the jokes are about girls sucking dick," Annabella said of the boy's taunts.

Brooke\* told of bullying resulting in unwanted sexual attention. She said, "I had a note passed around about me. They called me a pig, they called me a slut, and they called me a whore."

Brooke also described an instance in art class, and said, "I was sitting down, and I heard two people make a joke about me sucking dick. That joke was

made about me in sixth grade...I probably cried for a very long time."

Annabella described girls participating in catty slut-shaming. She addressed the behavior of these girls, saying, "They'll look at the girl they just called a slut, and say, 'Oh my god you're so pretty!'"

An entry from the Everyday Sexism Project describes a "teenage boy-maybe 16/17-calling me a tosser and a slut as I walk down my local high street. I was nine." Young girls seem to be raised to think they're objects open for judgement and criticism.

Along with these taunts, the girls I interviewed described the prerequisite to hook up culture. Annabella said that a kid in her class, age 12, told his friend that he wanted to have sex with the person he calls his "girlfriend" before he turns 15. She said no. John\* also texted his female friend who was with his girlfriend, and asked her to tell his girlfriend that he wanted to "Alabama hot pocket" her.

John\* was also described as someone who hangs out with a lot of girls and takes questionable pictures with them, but his girlfriend doesn't care. Annabella said, "Some of the kids in the couples don't want to be in a couple but they've been pressured into it because they want to be accepted."

Clearly, girls are "dating" guys who are making sexist remarks. They're calling girls "whores" and taunting them about sucking dick. How do these girls react? Do they care?

Kaitlyn\* answered, "The girls are ok with [the comments.] They want it. It gets to the point where some people in our grade are starting to dress like strippers, not to be rude. Before the boys and came in, and people were like "Oh,

we're dating," the girls weren't dressing like 20-year-olds going to a strip club. When the guys starting seeing the girls, it completely changed."

Carly\* agreed with Kaitlyn, and referring to the sexual remarks and name calling, said, "The girls didn't care. They went along with it. They said, 'I want a boyfriend, I want to be popular.'"

The infamous yearn for popularity and acceptance. Everyone experiences it, but some value popularity more than others. It's common to hear of people partaking in activities, betraying friends, or acting a certain way to be accepted.

People complain that the desire to appear "chill" stops people from standing up to sexual comments, catcalling, and rating. Girls have complained that guys will say, "She has a good butt, but she should talk less and go with the flow more."

We can even look at Jennifer Lawrence while examining this idea and her letter about equal pay. She described being seen as "difficult" when she asked to be payed the same as her male counterpart. A 12-year-old (or any girl who) wants to be accepted does not want to be seen as "difficult." They are taught at a young age that they should please guys and let them do what they want. Don't talk too much. Otherwise you're not "chill."

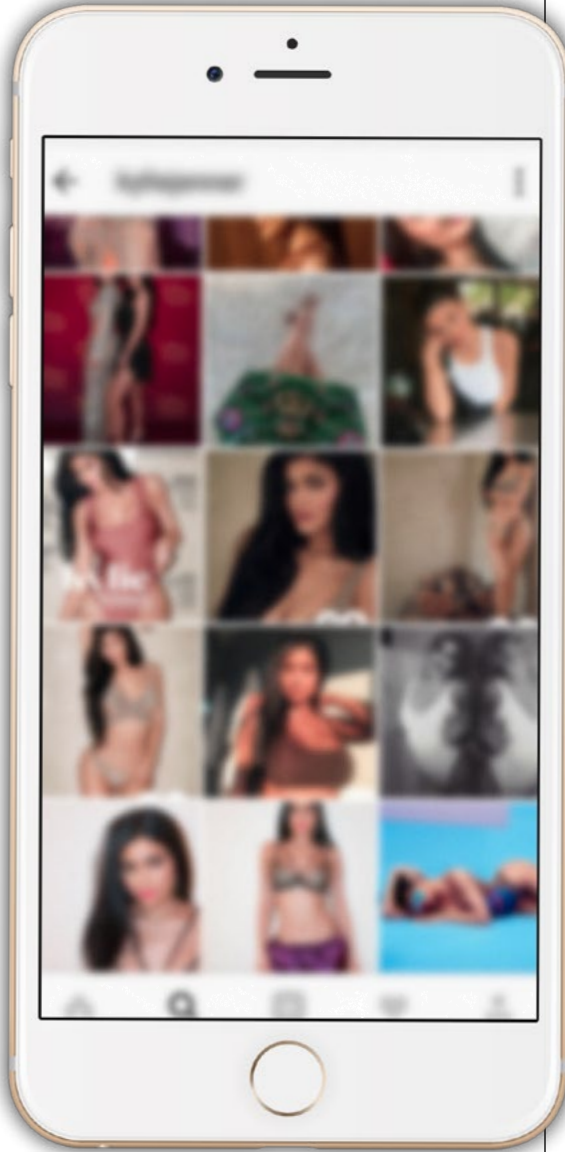
A friend of Annabella's, Jack\*, asked her out. She wasn't ready to date at the age of 12, so she politely said no. Ryan\*, Jack's older friend, felt Annabella's answer was not appropriate, and gave her a lecture about why she should've said yes to Jack.

According to Annabella, Ryan said, "I know you like him. I know when girls like guys. You just don't want your parents to get mad at you. This is your



fault. This is your thing. I get that. But you should compromise. Because he's such a nice guy..."

Ryan was spreading the idea that a girl must be submissive or "comprising" when she's asked to do something she doesn't want to do.



After hearing stories from girls as young as age 9 about unwanted sexualization, I wanted to know why they think this all happens. I was curious as to what people thought the root cause of this issue was, specifically about why this was starting at a younger age.

The girls' immediate response social media. "People are getting phones at younger ages," Kaitlyn responded.

"They can look up whatever they want. Now that people are getting phones and apple watches when they're

younger, I feel like it affects who they grow up to be." Annabella agreed, referring to a first grader with an apple watch.

Obviously, kids can't get phones on their own; it's up to the parents to provide them. Kaitlyn and Annabella pointed to a seemingly declining sense of control, dignity, and supervision from parents.

Annabella said, "Some of the parents want to be 'cool parents,' but in some ways that means giving up all respect and dignity."

They continued to infer that there is this rising fear parents are developing of their own children.

"Parents are getting scared of their children because they don't know what's going on," Annabella said. Many kids, they believe, have this newfound desire to act older than they actually are, resulting in a lack of control from parents because they don't understand what is going on.

Kaitlyn said that the fear of their kids being upset with them makes parents "not want to talk to them."

As the statistics I mentioned at the beginning of this article show, most of the activity in this article is about happens in school, outside of the walls of people's homes where parents have the opportunity to discipline their kids. The matter of whether or not this gives the parents opportunity for control comes into question.

"No matter what the parents try to teach their kid, sometimes an impression can last forever," Annabella said, mentioning an example in which a kid may be peer pressured into playing a game like "hot or not." "That's what's happening to some of our grade. Maybe they say something to their parents. The mom will be like, 'Oh, whatever, he's probably just in a phase.'"

A few of the girls brought up the desire their 6th grade classmates have to lose their virginity. Kids don't want to be kids anymore.

The media is little by little phasing

out the concept of innocence above the age of nine, and, like the girls brought up, kids can look up anything on their phones and listen to whatever they want.

Annabella pointed out that sex is becoming desensitized, and nobody is doing anything about it. "Parents aren't teaching their kids to wait until their older," she said. "They don't want to bother them and they want to be the 'cool parent.'"

Once again, this concept of the "cool parent" comes up.

People want to seem chill all the way through adulthood, and they may not know how to react to the extreme desire to grow up.

Annabella, Kaitlyn, and Carly agree that this results in the fear they were talking about. "The way that kids act changes of the years," Carly said. "Kids are starting to act like they're not their age. They don't want to act their age, but older."

Sociologist Koyel Bandyopadhyay noticed that with the increase of kids using social media, the amount of face-to-face time between parents and their children decreases.

Annabelle and Kaitlyn observed a disconnect between parents and kids, mostly because parents don't understand, or, more likely, don't want to understand what exactly is going on in this whole other reality of phones and social media.

Parents have become more lenient with boundaries when it comes to technology. This has led to a development of self-reliance and independence. However, parents need to be aware of what their kids are exposed to.

High school students also have a responsibility to be good role models for younger grades. They look up to us, both the boys and the girls. When older guys introduce rating girls and objectification to younger guys, girls are ignored when they express that this behavior is wrong and unkind.

We must enforce respect at a young age regarding the way we perceive women in order to prevent sexualization and objectification.

