

# The Cosmo Girl Lifestyle Is Dangerous & Deadly For Tweens & Teens

A Report by

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Popular culture is the leading source of sex education in the nation, and foremost among the tween and teen girl culture is *Cosmopolitan*. It is a commercial culture that sexualizes and objectifies children and glorifies casual, early sex in order to increase profits for a multiplicity of industries and pharmaceuticals with whom it shares financial interests, both private and public. It portrays a cavalier attitude about sex that is particularly dangerous and actually deadly to children.

From 1999-2008, tweens and teens were given their own version of *Cosmopolitan* called *CosmoGirl!* playing on the term “Cosmo Girl” coined by Helen Gurley Brown during her tenure at the magazine from 1965-97. While not as salacious as *Cosmo*, it nevertheless groomed young girls to become “fun and fearless” females ready for sexual adventures, urging them to build strong sexy bodies and become sexy, hot available kissers, etc.



Child development experts writing about the dangers of early sexualization illustrate its effect on elementary age girls. At an eight year old girl’s birthday party, the girls talked about how the boys liked a girl who wears midriff-bearing tops that the other girls are not allowed to wear. One of the girls boasted that she saw *CosmoGIRL!* at her teen-age cousin’s house that showed really skinny models wearing really short belly button shirts that were “sooo cool.” She said the magazine had an article on dieting, and she was on a diet to be really skinny too. The other girls also said they were going to go on diets.<sup>2</sup> Children are groomed easily and rapidly.

*CosmoGirl!* ceased publication under that name in 2008, and its content was basically absorbed by *Seventeen*.

However, the “Cosmo Girl” effect on tweens and teens continues in a much more harmful manner as the sex-centric *Cosmopolitan* targets vulnerable youngsters. *Cosmo*, like *CosmoGirl!*, features Disney stars and stars from other television and movies popular with tween and teen girls. However, while *CosmoGirl!*’s covers featured teasers about “hot looks for back to school” and “being a good kisser,” *Cosmo* features teasers such as “63 Secrets to Better Orgasm,” “21 Mind Blowing Sex Moves,” “Best Sex Ever,” “23 Sweet & Sexy Moves Orgasm Guaranteed,” alongside the tweens and teens’ favorite celebrities. Just as *CosmoGirl* could be purchased by girls of any age at checkout lines, *Cosmo*’s “Orgasm” directives, calling to tweens and teens who like Hillary Duff, can be purchased by girls of any age, at checkout lines.

Setting aside for a moment the inherent danger of exposing young girls to explicit sexual stimuli through a popular magazine (which will be discussed shortly), the “information” is itself dangerously false, pushing sexual experimentation to the detriment of health and safety. For example, in the January 1988 issue, *Cosmopolitan* claimed women had little reason to worry about contracting HIV. The author asserted that unprotected sex with an HIV-positive man did not put women at risk of infection. It went on to state that “most heterosexuals are not at risk” and that it is impossible to transmit HIV in the missionary position. The information was blatantly and dangerously false, lulling women into complacency despite extant medical information finding that women were at risk from intercourse with HIV-positive men.

This cavalier attitude about sex and particularly about exposing children to sexual words and images arises from the “sexual revolution” triggered by the fraudulent sexual “research” of Albert Kinsey. Kinsey, the most famous man for a decade, was a bi/homosexual, sado-masochist, pornography/masturbation addict. His team sexually abused hundreds of infants and children to reach conclusions about the harmlessness of adult sex with children. His interviews of aberrant subjects by aberrant interviewers would undermine the Judeo-Christian values upon which the country was built and replace them with wholly un-“scientific” standards calling for unrestricted sexual freedom for all ages. The 1948 and 1953 books, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*<sup>3</sup> burst onto the scene amid a media frenzy that proclaimed a new era of sexual freedom.

Notably, in those pre-Helen Gurley Brown days, *Cosmopolitan* was skeptical of the Kinsey claims, as a pro-Kinsey blogger lamented a few years ago.<sup>4</sup> *Cosmopolitan* featured the Female report on its cover in September 1953, but the review inside revealed that even *Cosmo* at that time did not buy into the proclamation of harmless sexual freedom. Social scientist Amram Scheinfeld attended a “sneak peak” of the Female volume for *Cosmo*, and was critical of Kinsey’s report:

...it boldly attacks many of our existing sex standards with blistering arguments plainly slanted against chastity and in favor of what used to be called free love. But for the most part, it is a technical treatise offering little that is startlingly new and much that is doubtful. It definitely does not measure up to the expectations of a shattering blast that was to upset all our sex thinking and change the whole pattern of our lives.

Kinsey’s most biting comments are reserved for the “frigid spinsters” who, not understanding what sex is, attempt to restrict the sex behavior of others. Referring to the more than a quarter of the unmarried older Kinsey females including many teachers, directors of youth organizations, club leaders, physicians, and political figures who never had climax, the report warns of the damage that may be done by such “sexually unresponsive, frustrated females” in the “guidance of our youth” and the dictation of public policies and legislation governing sex. An implication is that the better mentors of sex might be “the other half to two-thirds” of the unmarried Kinsey females “who did understand the significance of sex and were not living the blank or sexually frustrated lives which our culture, paradoxically, had expected them to live.”<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, *Cosmopolitan* fully embraced the implication Scheinfeld talked about when 12 years after the Kinsey Female book it hired Helen Gurley Brown, one of the “other half to two-thirds” who understood “the significance of sex and [was] not living the blank or sexually frustrated” life Kinsey denounced. Having herself swept into the limelight with a revolutionary book on sex, *Sex and the Single Girl* in 1964, Brown re-fashioned what had been a literary magazine into a Kinseyan no-holds barred sexual adventure magazine for women. Now, in keeping with Kinsey’s mantra that children are “sexual from birth,”<sup>6</sup> *Cosmopolitan* is targeting and marketing the magazine to young girls offering them the chance to be “fun, fearless, females.”

## I. What is the *Cosmo* Girl Lifestyle as Presented to Tweens and Teens?

Child development experts describe how *Cosmo* is used by and affects tweens and teens: A 13 year old was in her room reading an issue of *Cosmopolitan* to learn how to give a great blow job. Her best friend had told her that the most popular girl in their class had “gone down on” three of the football players, which the best friend thought was “cool.” The 13 year old didn’t think she’d know how to do it and didn’t want to ask her friend, but she found the answer in *Cosmo*.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, tweens and teens can find all kinds of answers in the magazine that lures them in with pictures and stories about their favorite celebrities mixing blow jobs and orgasms with Disney and other television shows and movies that are phenomenally popular with youth.

APRIL 2015



Former Disney star Hillary Duff (“Lizzy McGuire”) on the cover featuring: “63 Secrets to Better Orgasms, Go over the edge,” & “I like High-End Sex Parties-and I’m Not a Weirdo.”

Inside:

- A guide, including drawings, of sex positions that can be used when feeling under the weather. At the bottom of the page is a story about the rise in anal and colon cancers among young people, attributing it to obesity, poor diet and inactivity (not to anal sex, HPV or other STDs resulting from such experiments).
- An ad for “*Cosmo Kama Sutra The Sex Deck: 99 sex positions that’ll blow your mind*” and “69 Shades of *Cosmo Kinky Sex games edition*,” that includes a bondage cord teased with “Why settle for 50 when you can get 69 shades of COSMO!”

Looking at Hillary Duff one wonders what she is selling with her cleavage and bottom so prominently displayed alongside the orgasm hysteria and the “High End Sex Parties” protesting “I’m Not A Weirdo.” Is Hillary saying these things? How does a tween separate the words from the picture? How does a teen separate them—do they?

One Internet article, **Orgasms in the checkout line**, opined:

This *Cosmopolitan* headline slapped me in the face as I stood innocently in line at Food Lion, holding my Silk, avocados and Tostitos. Are things now really so ridiculous? This may officially make me an old fogey. But this headline is so wrong on so many levels. Allow me to rant.

First, how freaking inappropriate is this? (Yes, I catch the irony that I am also talking about it.) Isn’t this a personal topic? Pity the poor parent who must answer their child who wants to know why there are “63 secrets to better organisms.” Does one correct the child? “No, sweetie, that’s “orgasm,” not “organism.” Certainly children deserve the truth on healthy bodily functions. But really, is the checkout line at the grocery store the place to discuss it?

The media have already dumped a mountain of garbage on young girls. They must be pretty, stylish and SKINNY. Do they really need to grow up wondering if their orgasm is as good as it could be? Do any of us? Who grades them? Do we teach for the test?

If you feel the need to explore this issue, as an adult, seek a professional. Just don’t give females another reason to question themselves or be competitive. “My orgasm is better than yours!” “Is not!” “Is too! Na na na na na!”

And just what does this lovely headline say about our society? While women all over the world work tirelessly just to survive, we are so privileged we get to worry about the quality of our orgasms?! Forget starvation, death and destruction, let’s go for multiple orgasms, baby!<sup>8</sup>

## September 2013



CW Vampire Diaries Star Nina Dobrev on cover promoting “21 Mind Blowing Sex Moves, Crazy Sex Obsessions.”

Inside:

- “Your Passport to Hotter Sex” featuring a nude male with a strategically placed globe and another picture with a strategically placed beer stein amid a list of “naughty” foreign phrases.
  - “Sex Abroad Confessions” and “Kinkiest Trends Around The World.”
  - *What positions will make my boyfriend’s smallish penis feel larger?*
  - *Why does my boyfriend sometimes lose his erection during sex?*
  - *Sex with my boyfriend has become meh. How can I talk to him about improving it?*
- Recommendation: Cosmo’s Kinky Sex Games.**

## August 2013



Disney star and X Factor Judge Demi Lovato on cover promoting “Best Sex Ever. 42 New Tips”

Inside:

- *“I want to try anal sex, but I’m scared. Be honest...will it hurt?”* featuring two wooden dolls posed engaging in the act.  
**Recommendation: Good silicone lube and work up to it, but “You may just have a back door that you prefer not to use for guests.”**
- Tips on how to talk dirty and what to do long distance: Watching each other “do their thing” on Skype, bath sex, vibrating undies.

May 2013



CW Hart of Dixie star Rachel Bilson on cover sponsoring “23 Sweet and Sexy Moves Orgasm Guaranteed” and “Stuff you think he wants in Bed but really doesn’t.”

Inside:

- *Break out of the Orgasm Rut;*
- *What Finally Did it for Me, six women share the moves that “got their toes to curl.”*
- *When You Want More Sex Than He Does*
- *A feature story on a rock star male to female transgender and his wonderful “wife” and daughter.*

In addition, on the Web, there is an Apr 7, 2015 article, “10 Disney Songs to Have Sex to, Reviewed.” 1. “Colors of the Wind” (Pocahontas) “This is so messed up,” he mumbled. “Can we at least have butt sex?” “No.” “Can you go down on me?” “OK, yeah.” ... Conclusion: Unless you have a Disney fetish, not recommended, would not do again. If anyone has suggestions for nice things to do for boyfriends, hit me up.”

The reviews of the other nine “songs” were as pornographic as the first. This is clearly targeted to the tween or teen consumer. The tween or teen who does a Google search for their favorite Disney song would stumble upon this and then whenever she heard the songs again she will have a whole new set of images and activities in her mind.

## II. The Destructive, Deadly Consequences of the *Cosmo* Girl Lifestyle for Tweens and Teens

The *Cosmo* Girl lifestyle is not the harmless sexual adventure paradise portrayed by the magazine, particularly for tweens and teens who are still physically, mentally and emotionally immature and so unable to properly process the sexually explicit messages. For the pre-teen and teen reader, *Cosmo*’s emphasis on frequent recreational sex is anything but harmless fun.

### A. Early Exposure to Sexual Images and Activity Endangers Physical and Mental Health.

Pediatrician Meg Meeker has documented the devastating consequences that the *Cosmo* Girl lifestyle has had on a whole generation of young women. Some of the startling statistics, now 13 years old, that Dr. Meeker chronicles:

- From 2 to 4 million teenagers have sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), with many having more than one;<sup>9</sup>
- Teenagers account for 25 percent of the newly reported STD infections;<sup>10</sup>
- Nearly 50 percent of African-American teens have genital herpes;<sup>11</sup>
- One in 10 teenage girls has chlamydia, with one-half of all new cases occurring in girls from 15 to 19 years old;<sup>12</sup>
- One in five children over the age of 12 tests positive for herpes type 2;
- 50 percent of 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders have had sexual intercourse, with many more having engaged in oral or anal sodomy or mutual masturbation, which they do not regard as “having sex.”<sup>13</sup>

In the 1960s there were two known STDs—gonorrhea and syphilis—and they were curable with penicillin. Today, there are as many as 80 to 100 types of STDs, many with no cure at all and some with cures that are much more complex than a shot of penicillin.<sup>14</sup> In many cases, the STDs go undetected for years and lead to pelvic inflammatory disease which can require a radical hysterectomy or in some cases leads to death.<sup>15</sup> Human papilloma virus or HPV has gone from being relatively unknown in the 1980s to the most prevalent STD, affecting at least 20 million people.<sup>16</sup> HPV is a leading cause of cervical cancer, which in a generation has gone from being a disease primarily of post-menopausal women to one that is most prevalent in young women under 25.<sup>17</sup> HPV also causes vaginal, vulvar, uterine and penile cancers. Because many tweens and teens have been encouraged to engage in oral and anal sex (sodomy) to avoid getting pregnant, HPV has also been spread to those regions, causing anal cancer and cancers in the throat, head and neck.<sup>18</sup>

Dr. Meeker states that young women are at greater risk of developing cancer from HPV infections than are older women because of the relative immaturity of their immune systems.<sup>19</sup> Also, tween and teen bodies are more susceptible to infections in general due to their immaturity.<sup>20</sup> In particular, teen girls’ vaginas contain mucus that holds onto a virus more than does an older woman’s body and the teen’s immature cervical cells are more receptive to viral infections.<sup>21</sup> A young girl’s cervix develops slowly and has physiological differences from a woman’s cervix which makes the young girl more susceptible to STDs.<sup>22</sup> A young girl’s cervix is attractive to viruses, bacteria and other pathogens which seems to lead to a much greater risk for pelvic inflammatory diseases than that experienced by adult women.<sup>23</sup>

The physical ravages of STDs are not the only consequence of early experimental sex. Dr. Meeker calls the alarming increase in teen depression and suicides “Emotional STDs,” as or more devastating than HPV, chlamydia or other STDs.<sup>24</sup> Her years of treating tweens and teens has shown that early sexual activity by teens leads to emotional turmoil and psychological distress, coming as it does at a time when teens are already experiencing intense and confusing emotions and hormonal changes.<sup>25</sup> Over one-third of the adolescent population has thought about killing themselves.<sup>26</sup> One in eight teenagers is clinically depressed.<sup>27</sup> The rate of suicide increased 200 percent between 1992 and 2002.<sup>28</sup> “Sexual freedom causes most [teenagers] tremendous pain.”<sup>29</sup>

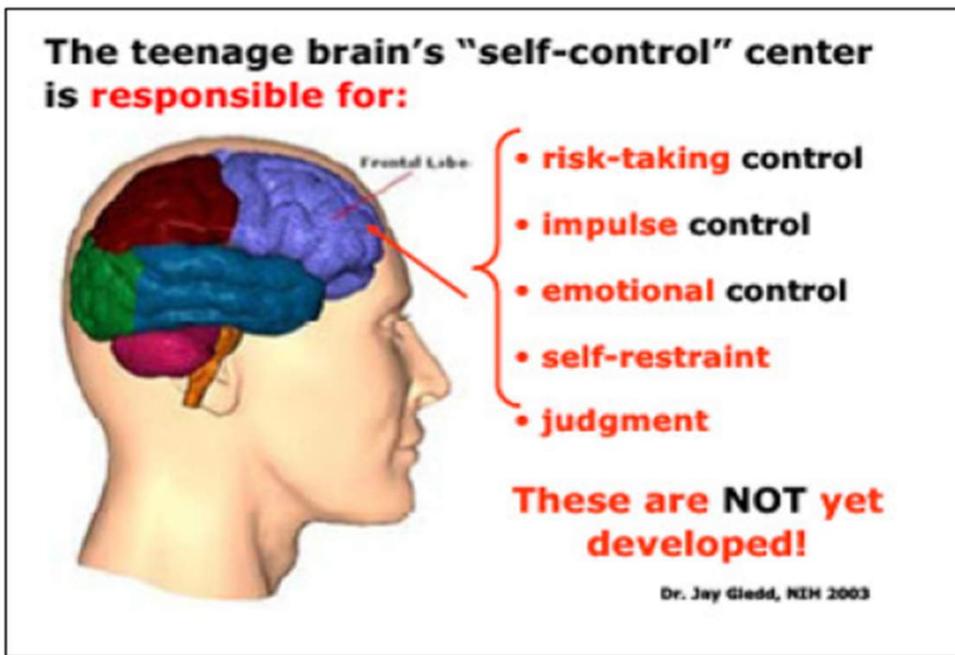
Dr. Meeker’s observations are supported by brain science which has been able to track the development of the human brain from infancy to adulthood. Studies using magnetic resonance image and brain mapping have shown that the part of the brain which controls risk-

taking, curbs inhibitions and permits the processing of complex emotions does not fully develop until the early 20s.<sup>30</sup> Until a young person is about 25 they are subject to “continuous neurological developments increased preferences for risky behavior and novelty seeking,” which promotes the development of addictive behaviors, be it nicotine, alcohol, drugs or sex.<sup>31</sup>

Prior to that time, tweens and teens would be unable to properly process the sexual stimuli they are receiving from reading or viewing sexually explicit words and images, let alone the emotions accompanying sexual activity. Tween and teen brains are overwhelmed by the imagery, causing long-term damage to mental and emotional development. As Dr. Meeker found, if the teens actually act out on what they read and find that it does not lead to the kind of freedom and joy promised, then the trauma is increased and can lead to PTSD as well as depression and suicidal ideation.<sup>32</sup>

Below, “for more than twenty years, National Institute of Mental Health neuroscientist Dr. Jay Giedd has studied the development of the adolescent brain. Decades of imaging work have led to remarkable insight and a more than a few surprises.”<sup>33</sup>

**Dr. Giedd:** At different ages of life certain parts of the brain have much more dynamic growth than at other times. And so for very early in life we have our five senses where our visual system and audio system is getting established and optimized for the world around us. In adolescents, the key changes are in the frontal part of the brain involved in controlling our impulses, long range planning, judgment, decision making.

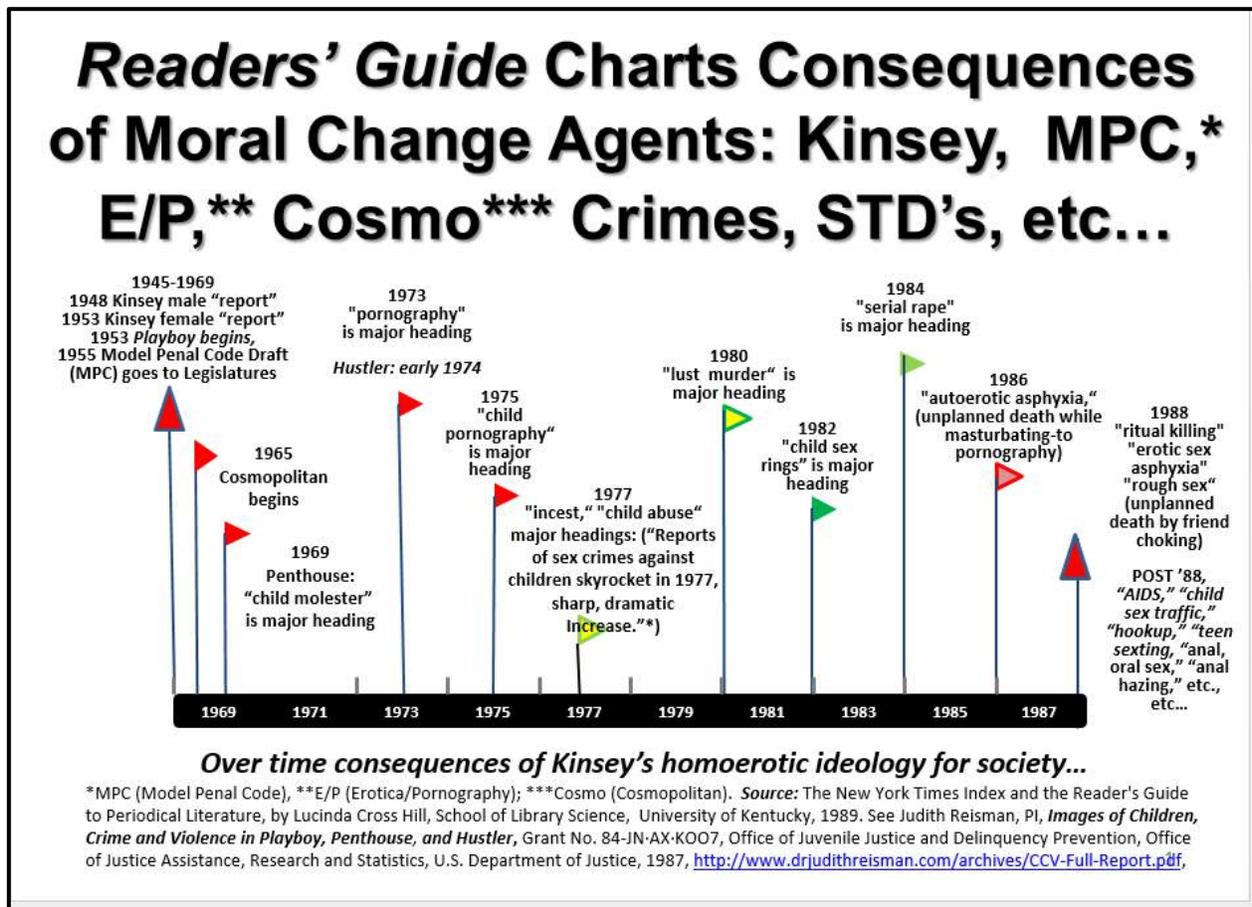


“The most surprising thing has been how much the teen brain is changing. By age six, the brain is already 95 percent of its adult size. But the gray matter, or thinking part of the brain, continues to thicken throughout childhood ... this process of thickening of

the gray matter peaks at about age 11 in girls and age 12 in boys, roughly about the same time as puberty.”

But another part of the brain -- the cerebellum, in the back of the brain -- is not very genetically controlled...is very susceptible to the environment. And interestingly, it's a part of the brain that changes most during the teen years. This part of the brain has not finished growing well into the early 20s, even.<sup>34</sup>

Add to this the number of tweens and teens who have been sexual abused as a result of all our "sexual freedom," reflected in the Deviance Time line, a record of moral, cultural change.



### B. What They Don't Know Can Hurt-or Kill-Them

Even more dangerous than what is contained in the *Cosmo* girl message to tweens and teens is what is omitted. As discussed above, in January 1988 *Cosmo* girls were falsely told that they could not get HIV from good old fashioned missionary position heterosexual sex even if they did not use a condom. From that time to the present *Cosmo* girls are told that if they insist that their guys use condoms then they will be protected from STDs when they engage in their sexual adventures. However, as was the case with the HIV story, these representations are false and dangerously so.

First of all, condoms have never been FDA approved for anything other than vaginal sex.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the years of talking about "safe sex" and of anal sex being a good alternative

since it will not lead to pregnancy have lured unsuspecting young girls (and boys) into dangerous sexual activity that, as discussed above, has led to an epidemic of STDs among adolescents and young adults. In addition, even with vaginal intercourse, condoms are not effective against all types of STDs. Condoms have been shown to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted HIV infections in *men and women*, and reduce the risk of gonorrhea for men by 87 percent, but only if used properly 100 percent of the time.<sup>36</sup> *And, there have been no scientific condom “tests” using girls and boys—minors—which would be ethically prohibited.* There is insufficient evidence regarding whether condoms are effective in preventing other STDs.<sup>37</sup>

This is particularly true in light of the fact that some STDs, including HPV and herpes, are transmitted from one person to another through skin contact, not merely through the transmission of bodily fluids.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, wearing a condom might be effective to avoid transmission from contact with some bodily fluids and the skin of the genitals.<sup>39</sup> However, if tweens and teens engage in oral sex or mutual masturbation, then there is no protection from transmission of certain STDs, which is seen in the skyrocketing rates of HPV and herpes infections and even cancers in the throat and mouth.<sup>40</sup>

These statistics have not been reported in mainstream news outlets, let alone in magazines such as *Cosmo*, leaving *Cosmo* girls of all ages at risk. However, the risk is greater for tweens and teens who are more likely to engage in risky behavior and more likely to engage in non-vaginal intercourse because of demands from boyfriends for sodomy and also fear of pregnancy.<sup>41</sup>

A final danger posed by many of the activities promoted by *Cosmo* is becoming easily accessible prey for sexual predators. The FBI and other law enforcement agencies which have studied sexual assault and sexual predators have determined that predators engage in grooming of their victims by introducing them to various types of contacts and lowering their inhibitions until they are primed for sexual assault.<sup>42</sup> Many of the predators use social media to pose as desirable young men, lure the girls in, and then force them to engage in acts via video conferencing or Skype.<sup>43</sup> If the tweens and teens have already read about using social media to have long distance sex with their boyfriend, then the predator’s job will be easier.

### **III. Protecting Children from the Toxic Effects of the Cosmo Girl Lifestyle**

Society has frequently taken action to protect children from the dangerous effects of toxic substances, including tobacco and alcohol, that have been consciously or subconsciously marketed to them. This has been extended to unhealthful foods such as sugary sodas and cereals with some governments calling for bans of advertisements or placement of such unhealthful products in ways that are attractive to children. Similar action should be taken to protect tweens and teens from the toxic effects of early exposure to the sexually explicit messages and images in *Cosmo*.

#### **A. Society Has Acted To Protect Children From Dangerous, Addictive Materials.**

In 2000 a one year study of 700 12- and 13-year-olds found that decades of nicotine addiction could begin within days of inhaling a first cigarette.<sup>44</sup> The study director, Dr. Joseph R.

DiFranza reported that children who start that young "have an extremely hard time quitting compared to 18-year-olds" for there is "no safe level of use with tobacco," even if use starts at an older age. "You're never old enough to smoke." Nicotine exposure "can modify crucial brain development during the teen years." Such modification occurs "particularly in areas like decision-making abilities."<sup>45</sup> Based on studies like these, cigarette advertising was significantly curtailed, and widespread campaigns to stop smoking, and in particular, stop smoking in the vicinity of children, were launched. Cigarettes cannot be sold to anyone under 18, and smoking is becoming less accepted in public places because of its toxic effects.

Similar studies regarding alcohol consumption have similarly led to campaigns to prevent under-age drinking. A national survey of 43,093 adults, published July 3, 2006 in Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine found that 47 percent who "begin drinking alcohol before the age of 14 become alcohol dependent at some time in their lives, compared with 9 percent of those who wait at least until age 21."<sup>46</sup> Aaron White, an assistant research professor in the psychiatry department at Duke University and the co-author of a recent study of extreme drinking on college campuses says "We definitely didn't know 5 or 10 years ago that alcohol affected the teen brain differently....Now there's a sense of urgency. It's the same place we were in when everyone realized what a bad thing it was for pregnant women to drink alcohol."<sup>47</sup> Alcohol also appears to damage more severely the frontal areas of the adolescent brain, crucial for controlling impulses and thinking through consequences of intended actions — capacities many addicts and alcoholics of all ages lack. These brain areas directing control, motivation and goal setting are "heavily remolded and rewired, as teenagers learn....how to exercise adult decision-making skills, like the ability to focus, to discriminate, to predict and to ponder questions of right and wrong."<sup>48</sup>

Sugar-laden foods have also caught the attention of those trying to protect children from unhealthy, life-shortening substances. In 2007, U.S. Federal Trade Commissioner Jon Leibowitz, opened the FTC–HHS Forum on "Marketing, Self-Regulation & Childhood Obesity" with the following statement: "The proportion of overweight children ages six to 11 has increased almost fivefold in a generation, growing from four percent in the early 1970s to 19 percent by 2004."<sup>49</sup> The *Northeastern University School of Law* published "Application Of Law To The Childhood Obesity Epidemic," reporting that one study found a sugar drink a day increased obesity by 60% for that child.<sup>50</sup> Confirming extant data on childhood vulnerability to most addictions, Commissioner Leibowitz says childhood obesity will overwhelm our health care system as we produce "the first generation of American children with shorter life spans than their parents." He warned that marketing junk food to children is a public health hazard. Should obesity rates continue a government ban may follow.<sup>51</sup>

If placing tobacco, alcohol or even "junk food" in the hands of children is a public health hazard, how much more so is marketing dangerous even deadly experimental sex in the pages of *Cosmo*?

**B. Stealth Marketing and Advertising of Unhealthy and Dangerous Materials to Children, Tweens and Teens Includes Tobacco, Alcohol, Junk Food and in *Cosmo*, Sexual Experimentation.**

Actions to protect children from materials that are harmful to their health and well-being have uncovered stealth marketing and advertising strategies that are used to lure children, oftentimes unknowingly, into desiring the substances and then either using their own funds or pestering their parents into spending money to purchase them. These same strategies have been used by purveyors of pornography, and by *Cosmopolitan* to lure young people into their unhealthy lifestyles. Work such as Dr. Reisman's study on images of children in *Playboy*, *Penthouse and Hustler*<sup>52</sup> and other public campaigns have succeeded in limiting the sale of these publications to adults, although marketing to children continues. However, no such restrictions have yet been placed on *Cosmopolitan*.

### C. Marketing to Kids, Tweens and Teens Is Big Business



Texas A&M marketing professor, James U. McNeal, PhD. wrote five books on marketing to children, including, *The Kids Market* and *The Great Tween Buying Machine*., in which he reports that children aged 4-7 and **tweens** aged 8-12 directly influence hundreds of billions of sales. He reports on the myth that, “*We don't target kids. All of our customers are adults,*” as opposed to the reality that “**the firm must have a secret source of new customers only it knows about....**Children find security in attaching themselves to an object....a brand-that enhances their

well-being....”<sup>53</sup>

The lucrative kid, tween and teen market has spawned an industry that promises to unlock that great buying power and create brands that children, tweens and teens will be attracted to. For example, Yankelovich Inc. brags that their marketing knowledge “predicts.... behavior.”<sup>54</sup> Others promise “attitude” and “behavioral” data that will reveal how to recruit and maintain consumers to a company’s Lifestyle products and services.<sup>55</sup> They advise that brand is an intangible concept....a promise....a short-cut of *attributes, benefits, beliefs and values that ... simplify the decision-making process....*Since a brand is reflected in everything the company does, a **holistic branding approach** requires a *strategic perspective....* [B]randing should always start at the top....with the CEO.<sup>56</sup>

One company, TGI (BMRB's Target Group Index) claims to be the world's leading provider of marketing and media surveys,<sup>57</sup> claiming to have modern investigative techniques proven to cause massive groups of people to change direction or to further solidify their “attitudes” and “behaviour” by buying the TGI clients’ advertised products. TGI, like other major marketers, proves its success by its “accountability,” the increase or decrease in new and revised product sales. A well-known dirty little secret in advertising is that youth are a critical target audience as buyers age they must be replaced by younger buyers. TGI helps to fill that need with Youth TGI, a biannual nationally-representative survey of 7-19 year-olds in Britain. Established in 1993, Youth TGI provides valuable insight into how lifestyles of the 7-19 UK market has been programmed by marketers.

**communicate**

In addition, Youth TGI provides a wealth of media and marketing information. As a single-source planning tool, the survey allows users to analyse any product or brand on the survey to gain a deeper understanding of the audience, while also highlighting the best ways to reach them.

Understand not just what kids do but why they do it, through their attitudes, concerns and leisure activities.

To help deepen our understanding of the 7-19s market, Youth TGI provides valuable insights into their world through the measurement of attitudes and main concerns. Over 180 statements cover attitudes to:

• Appearance	• Food
• Environment	• Leisure
• Fashion	• Music
• Travel	• Media
• Finance	• Family

The survey also measures the concerns of young people towards broad issues, gauging how worried they are about contemporary issues such as AIDS, pollution, rainforest destruction, drugs and famine. Additional questions are asked about what is important to them in life, such as being healthy, religion, having children and having lots of money.

Although “Youth TGI” research officially starts at age 7, like most marketing agencies, TGI digs into the subconscious and conscious desires, hopes, and fears of younger girls and boys. Typical of other large agencies, TGI promises clients they will increase child purchasers by:

- Media evaluation, sales, and planning
- **360-degree understanding of youth target groups**
- **Insight into markets driven by pester power**
- Effective communication across the sensitive youth market
- Awareness of trends that will influence the markets of the future

*Youth TGI is a biannual nationally representative survey of 7-19 year olds, collecting data from 6,000 respondents each year. Since its establishment in 1993, this single-source marketing and media survey has been providing invaluable and accurate insights into the product usage, media habits, lifestyles and attitudes of the youth market. Among its many benefits, Youth TGI enables subscribers to assess the similarities and vast array of differences between youth sub-groups defined by age, gender, geography and attitudes.*

**A: 360-degree understanding of youth target groups—saturation:**

ROAR, a UK media consortium<sup>58</sup> researching 15-24 year olds explains that a 360 degree strategy of “media

saturation” converts youth into steadfast clients.

Mainstream interest and adoption of new products only occurs at the point of media saturation – when they see something everywhere i.e. at “360 degree” media coverage. iPod is a good example [of] 360 degree coverage. Susan explains; “It was everywhere, that’s when you had to start paying attention.” It is this....360 degree coverage that drags the Mainstream out of their filtering attitude.<sup>59</sup>

In other words, TGI excavates children’s psyches to uncover the effective propaganda that will guarantee to reshape children’s brains, minds, memories, and conduct to induce and maintain product purchase, including addiction. Saturation propaganda is problematic when a client sells unwanted, trifling toys, and clothes but when clients sell alcohol, cigarettes, drugs and sex, saturation propaganda is a social contagion that is toxic for children and society.

**D Exploiting parental love via “Pester power:**

**Pester Power** is a key module for “360 degree” market strategists. “Pester power” exploits

**7-19 Gr**

Youth TGI is used every day by brand owner, agency and media owner companies to:

- understand and define young target groups
- identify with the significant changes as children grow older
- tap into markets where pester power is prominent
- determine the best forms of communication for lucrative youth markets, while ensuring that the tone is right
- uncover the trends in youth culture that may influence the adult markets for the future

the “ability children have to nag their parents into purchasing items they would otherwise not buy or performing actions they would otherwise not do.....”<sup>60</sup> *The Washington Post* reported:

At a press conference here yesterday, ACT released its new 22-minute film...."Kids for Sale." Portions of the movie deal with the mission of advertising for children: to get their parents to buy a certain type of toy or cereal.

"They (the children) use all the *pester power* they can muster" to talk their parents into purchases....<sup>61</sup>

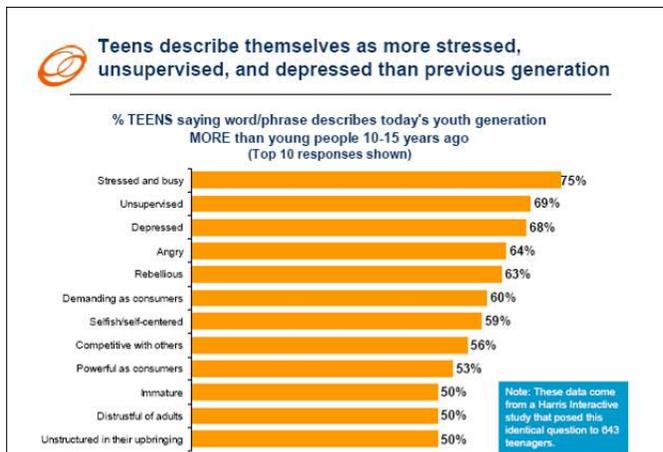
TGI advertises the expertise of their marketers to create child pesterers for their client products. TGI guarantees to train children to buy their clients' fashions, wear their clients' makeup, eat their clients' foods, drink their clients' beverages and use and copy their clients' multi-media products. TGI, is typical in its violation of child subjects. Participating parents and children are commonly offered some small payment or gift, having no idea that they are being used as test subjects to uncover better strategies for manipulating parents and children. The successful sales of inappropriate and even injurious items to children stands on research that found parental love and fear of their child being socially "left out," can often overwhelm even alert parents. Add parents fear of their child's rejection especially that of divorced parents, and the "pester power" that exploits overtaxed parents, and marketers will commonly secure the product sale.



Another tool is the "Face to Face Omnibus" survey of "Adults & Youth," which provides the demographic and 30,000 "behavioural or attitudinal characteristics" to plan a marketing campaign.<sup>62</sup>

Marketers' deliberate exploitation of "pester power" positions the parental "lifestyle" against that of, in this case, a *Cosmo* lifestyle, weakening parental authority and moral guidance. Parents may be hard put to protect the harmony of their homes from advertisers who cynically exploit children's innocence, to "pester their parents" for some product (also called "nag and whine" campaigns").

### E. Marketing Strategies Have Succeeded In Manipulating Tweens and Teens.



The 2004 "Harris Interactive/Kid Power Poll of Youth Marketers,"<sup>63</sup> finds children saying they are stressed, unsupervised, and depressed, angry, distrustful of adults, and parents, and feeling powerful only as consumers, Facing such daily manipulation, millions of children must yield to the lifestyle, morality, and values of cynical marketers—connect the dots from *Cosmo* to *Victoria's Secret* to *Playboy*, etc.

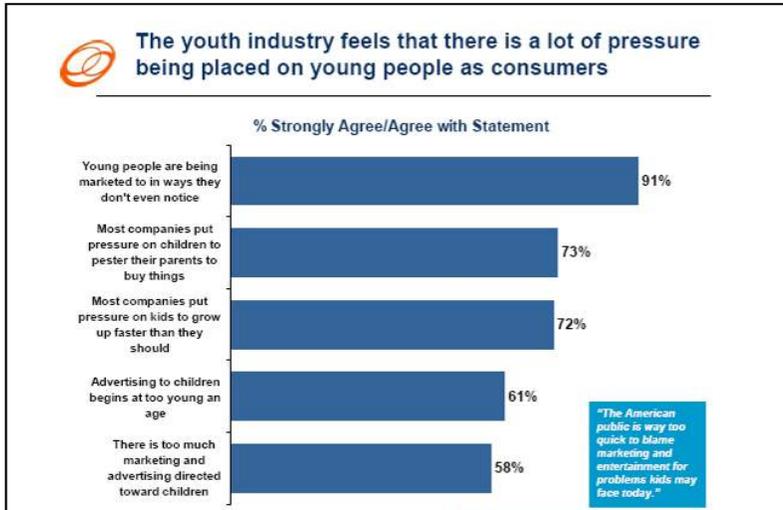
marketed to in ways they don't even notice;"

- 73%: "most companies put pressure on children to pester their parents to buy things;"
- 72%: "most companies put pressure on kids to grow up faster than they should;"
- 61%: "advertising to children begins at too young an age;"

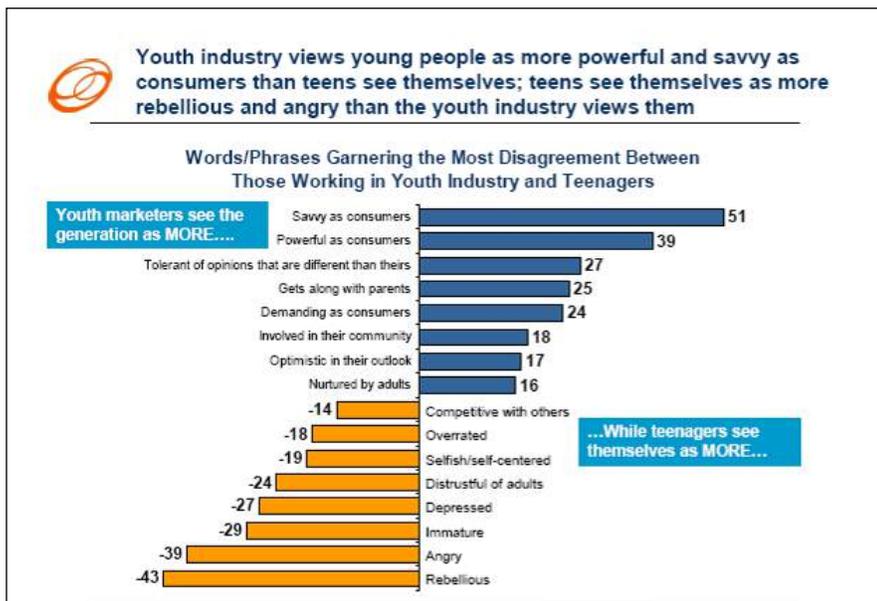
- 91%: "young people are being

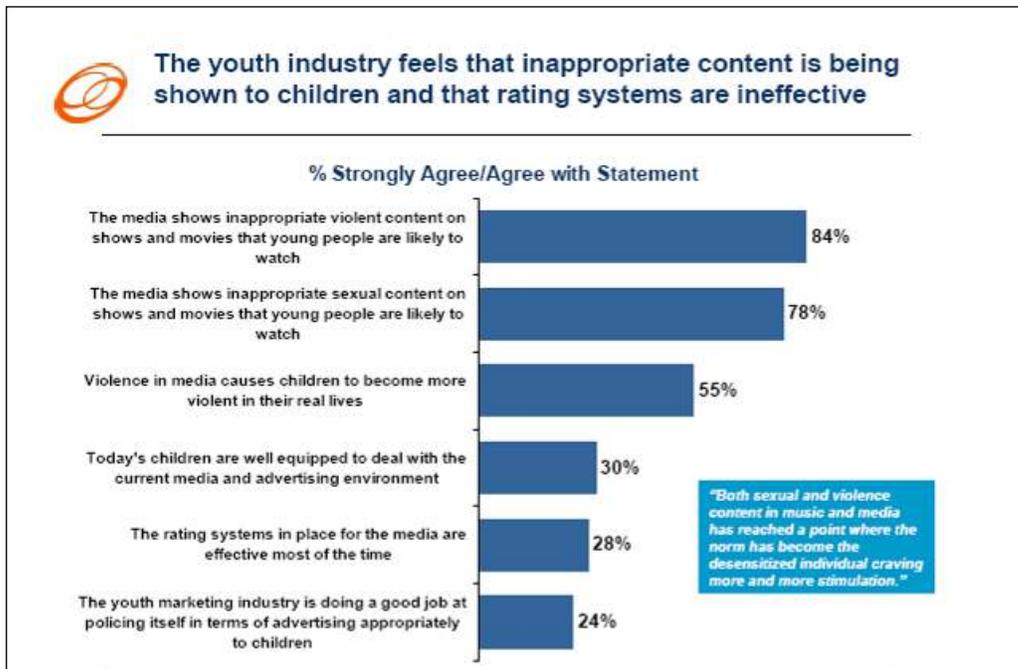
- 58%: “there is too much marketing and advertising directed toward children;”
- 65% say: **advertising on book covers is inappropriate.**

[A] stark finding from this study...is that those working in youth marketing approve of advertising to children five years before they feel that young people can make intelligent choices as consumers...There is a sense of urgency to reach them while young with a brand. The brand connection carries over to an age where they can make or influence purchase decisions.”



It is worrisome to see how marketers delude themselves regarding the harm they are obviously doing to youths, claiming children are “savvy” and “powerful” despite the obvious manifestations of children in distress.





#### **F. When Direct Advertising Is Not Possible, Marketers Use Cartoons & Celebrities to Manipulate Children, Tweens and Teens.**

Since direct sales of alcohol, cigarettes, and pornography to children is illegal, savvy marketers and advertisers have found more creative, indirect means to create child, tween and teen consumers. For example, women have been outspoken foes of pornography, so in order to groom future consumers, little girls are introduced to their favorite celebrities in suggestive poses, wearing suggestive clothing and then introduced to things such as orgasms, oral sex, orgies, and talking dirty in order to reduce their resistance to even more salacious content as they get older.

In *Rethinking Regulation of Advertising Aimed at Children*, one legal commentator showed how advertisers exploit celebrities and cartoons to attract children.<sup>64</sup>

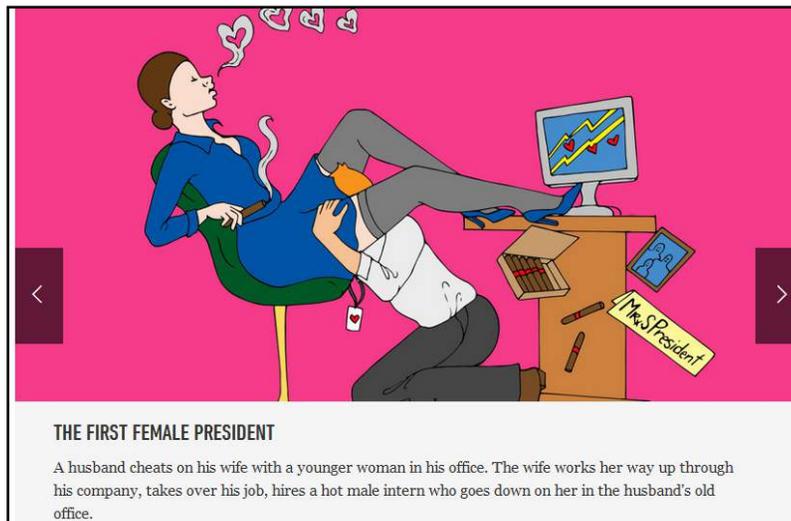
Indeed, many companies currently use characters from popular children's television in their ads. This widespread use of these characters in advertising indicates that companies realize the persuasive effect that these characters have over children. Studies also show that the use of cartoon characters or celebrities increases commercials' influence over children. Children certainly recognize and retain images of cartoon characters--even those that do not appear in children's shows--used in advertisements. A 1996 study revealed that nine and ten-year-olds were able to identify the Budweiser Frogs nearly as often as they were able to identify Bugs Bunny. This fact is even more significant when one considers that these frogs do not even appear in commercials aimed at children. Thus, at least in theory, children should not have significant exposure to these commercials. Similarly, a 1991 study showed that as many six-year-olds could identify Joe Camel, the cartoon camel formerly used by Camel cigarettes, as could identify the

Disney Channel logo.<sup>180</sup> In light of evidence of the influence that cartoons and celebrities hold over children, several British broadcasters have banned their use in food commercials aimed at children in an attempt to fight that country's problem with childhood obesity.<sup>65</sup>

Cartoons have a pull beyond commercials, often drawing children into content that is not meant for them.

[C]hildren who view television without parental supervision may view significant amounts of television not aimed at them. Cartoons such as Fox's "The Family Guy," Comedy Central's "South Park," or cartoons that are part of The Cartoon Network's "Adult Swim," are not aimed at children. However, children may simply come across these shows and watch them because they are cartoons.<sup>66</sup>

Likewise, tweens and teens who pick up *Cosmo* will view cartoons such as the example below, a sample of one of the "9 Hilarious, Completely Spot-on Feminist Sex Positions," because they are cartoons. Each one is more obscene than the other. Tweens and teens picking up a copy at the newsstand would be attracted to the colorful graphics and want to try out what is presented as fun, fearless and empowering but in fact could leave them with life-threatening infections, infertility or an early death.



The Harris poll shows that advertisers know that sexual and violent messages, such as "Better Orgasms," and "Sex Parties," reaches and desensitizes tweens and teens, leading to "craving more and more stimulation," the definition of addiction: "the state of being enslaved to a habit or practice or to something that is psychologically or physically habit-forming, as narcotics, to such an extent that its cessation causes severe trauma" Hence, the marketing field documents their business as creating sexual, violent and general addictions, indeed addictions of children to selected products.

Scores of scientific studies confirm the obvious, that cartoons and celebrities attract and seduce children’s attention, thus their brains, minds, memories and behaviors. Children affectionately embrace the cartoons that adults put in their way, from Mickey Mouse to Joe Camel and the *Playboy* bunny. Celebrities and cartoon characters--as commercial speech--are aimed at the vulnerable minds of children to reshape the culture of childhood.

English commentator Yvonne Roberts writes that “raunch culture...[is] determined to turn tots into spendthrift tarts.”<sup>67</sup> *Cosmo* features countless ads selling multiple name brands of SEXY make up, perfumes, shampoos, hair dyes, SEXY clothing, SEXY nail polish, shoes, stockings, bras and panties, sanitary napkins, SEXY creams and lotions, amid stories about celebrities, orgasms and orgies. How many SEXY eye liners, face creams, shampoos and push-up bras does a girl, small, medium or large, actually need? Playboy underwear, the “bunny tattoo” and similar items were marketed by *Seventeen* (right) in May 1985 and *CosmoGirl!* merging with *Seventeen* illustrates the multi-faceted nature of the grooming of young girls.



Parents are daily overwhelmed by the billion-dollar campaign to sexually exploit their children. As it sometimes takes one cigarette to addict a child to nicotine and one sugary drink a day to seriously compromise a child’s health, so it only takes one instance of trying the *Cosmo* girl lifestyle, *i.e.*, “fun, fearless” sex, to infect a child with a life-threatening disease.<sup>68</sup>

Efforts to stop *Cosmo*’s stealth campaign to have tweens and teens become *Cosmo* girls should rival or exceed the efforts to curb childhood obesity and smoking. Just as was done with tobacco and alcohol (age 21), the sale of sex-centric *Cosmo* should be restricted and access granted only to those over 18 in order to protect the health and well-being of the next generation.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Judith A. Reisman, Ph.D., Research professor at Liberty University School of Law and Director of the Liberty Center for Child Protection; Mary E. McAlister, Esq. Senior Litigation Counsel for Liberty Counsel.

<sup>2</sup> Diane E. Levin, Ph.D & Jean Kilbourne, Ed.D., *SO SEXY SO SOON, THE NEW SEXUALIZED CHILDHOOD AND WHAT PARENTS CAN DO TO PROTECT THEIR KIDS*, 25 (Ballantine Books, 2008).

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