

SEXT UP KIDS

[Transcript]

INTRODUCTION

Narrator: Little girls entranced by a world of make-believe. Playing princess, putting on makeup, wearing high heels, wanting to look older. But not this kind of older. Controversy rages over sexualization of little girls. From hit TV shows to high fashion spreads in Vogue to amateur dance sensations on YouTube, little girls are strutting their stuff before they even have any stuff.

Susan Linn: Little girls are going from toddlers to teenagers with just about nothing in between.

Narrator: The desire to look older younger is what's fueling the tween market – a market increasingly sexualized, making prepubescent girls look like porn-stars.

Alexandra: We have to become bustier at an earlier age. We have to be very skinny at an earlier age.

Narrator: And as ever-younger boys have 24/7 access to hard-core internet porn...

Teen Boys: I want to say in grade four or grade five. / Six or seven, like I had a friend over at my house. / Ok, dudes on top of the girl, that's what sex is.

Narrator: ...Some girls now feel pressure to deliver porn-star performance.

Peggy Orenstein: Anal is becoming the new oral.

Narrator: Smartphones and social media make it possible not only for kids to consume X-rated images but to produce them with devastating consequences.

Dot: My heart just dropped. I was like, how many people have seen me like this?

Narrator: Forcing kids to grow up in a hypersexualized world.

Title Screen: Sext Up Kids

SEXUALIZED CHILDREN & MARKETING

Narrator: These images are unsettling. For some, even titillating. Somehow, sexualized children have become part of our culture. Somehow, letting eleven year olds dress like this

has become okay. Who would actually let their kid walk out the door like that? Well, millions of parents because this clothing sells. By degrees, preteen clothing moved from sassy to suggestive to outright sexy. It's called sexualization, and it has become the new normal – thanks in large part to a concept invented by the marketing industry.

Text on screen: KAGOY

Narrator: "KAGOY": Kids are getting older younger.

Susan Linn: What the marketing industry decided to do is to say, "Well, if three year olds want to be thirteen year olds, let's market to them as if they were thirteen year olds. And if eight year olds want to be sixteen year olds, let's market to them as though they were teenagers."

Narrator: That market is now worth an estimated 150 billion dollars a year in the U.S. alone. And it's dominated by junior versions of teens' favorite stores. A survey of fifteen major American clothing store websites found about a third of girls' apparel was considered sexualized – with everything from push-up bras and thongs to micro-mini skirts aimed at adolescent shoppers.

Girl: Cinderella. The Princess and the Frog...

Narrator: But the slide into sexualization may begin at a much earlier age, starting with something as innocuous as playing princess. And when it comes to playing princess, Disney has cornered the market. With over 26,000 items, 'princess' is now the hottest girls' brand on the planet. And every little girl knows their names by heart.

Girls: Belle, Snow White, Jasmine, Ariel, Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty and Cinderella from Cinderella.

Narrator: Just guess what they want to be when they grow up?

Girl: A princess. / A princess too. / Be a princess too.

Peggy Orenstein: It is cute. It's really adorable. Who doesn't like to see their little girl walking around? And there's this way that it's very precious, and it feels like something protective against sexualization, but I think there's a real compelling argument to be made that it's priming them for sexualization. When there's just one form of play that they do for three years, and it's all about being the prettiest of them all and the fairest of them all, that becomes problematic. It goes really quickly from being the prettiest little girl to needing to be the hottest little girl. And its emphasis is over and over on beauty, on externals, on your defining yourself through how you look to others. And that primes girls and pushes them towards the hypersexualization that happens at an older age.

Girls: [Singing] "Happy Birthday Zoe!"

Narrator: That older age is now about seven. That's when girls get bored with Princess Barbie and beg for dolls with attitude.

Peggy Orenstein: So first we had the Bratz dolls that had the big, pouty lips that are highly glossy, and they had those heavy eyeshadows and they had tiny little skirts. And they looked really... Barbie seems quaint by comparison. These dolls look like little Sesame Street walkers.

Narrator: And if Bratz dolls aren't racy enough, consider the dolls from “Monster High.”

Susan Linn: They go beyond Barbie. They go beyond the Bratz dolls. They're more anorexic looking. They are more sexualized than even the dolls were before. And, you know, the Bratz dolls were really pretty bad to begin with.

Narrator: Even under the watchful eye of parents, toy manufacturers and marketers have a captive audience. Federal law now allows advertisers to market directly to kids on television with very few restrictions. And those restrictions disappear on the Internet, where most six year olds navigate freely to their favorite toy sites.

Susan Linn: Children can be targets for marketing any time of day or night, and marketers can bypass parents as they've never been able to before.

Peggy Orenstein: It's going to be dolls, it's going to be books, it's going to be a movie, it's going to be a TV show, it's webisodes, it's clothing, it's accessories.

Narrator: The American Psychological Association has been tracking the impact of this avalanche of sexualized toys and clothing on girls. According to the APA's landmark study, as girls hit the teen years, the damage mounts.

Dr. Deborah Tolman: There were strong associations with negative health outcomes: mental health, depression, self-esteem. Sexualization was associated with more risk-taking, lack of condom use.

Narrator: Marketers now even sell 'stupid' as sexy. For example, the “Be Stupid” campaign by Diesel jeans. Some of the campaign's most controversial billboard images have been banned in Britain.

PUBERTY & SELF-ESTEEM

Narrator: At the core of concern about sexualization, just as girls hit puberty, they start seeing themselves as objects of someone else's needs and desires.

Dr. Deborah Tolman: We learn how to sexualize ourselves. It makes us very, very self-conscious all the time because we're thinking about what we look like all the time.

iGirl Counselor: Sometimes my monster is actually a bunch of super-models who laugh at me and go, "Haha, we're so much better than you."

Narrator: In British Columbia, the "iGirl" workshop tries to help girls fight sexualization.

Saleema Noon: The goal of "iGirl" is to provide girls at your age...

Narrator: Since beginning her workshops a decade ago, Saleema Noon has seen every younger girl succumb to the pressure of being seen to be sexy.

Saleema Noon: Recently, I was at a school where two grade seven girls took some pictures of themselves topless at a sleepover on one of their cell phones and sent the pictures to one of the boys in their class who they were crushing on. And when they were asked why they sent the pictures, they said, "Because we wanted him to notice us." And I felt like crying.

Narrator: Because she hears stories like these too often, Noon lowered the target age of her workshop.

Saleema Noon: We targeted the ten to thirteen year old age group and very quickly we found that this was too late. Now we work with nine year olds. And it's so important because, at earlier and earlier ages, girls are pressured to be adult. They're not allowed to be kids for long anymore.

iGirl Counselor: Sometimes girls say bad things about themselves. Sometimes they speak badly about themselves. What are some things that you hear?

iGirl Participant: 'Oh, I'm not skinny enough!'

Saleema Noon: So more and more, our girls are feeling pressure to be adults.

Narrator: And that pressure only increases with technology. As devices designed for adults, like smartphones, are now being used by kids as young as nine.

Saleema Noon: Kids are getting these adult tools in their hands, and they're not understanding, and maybe they're incapable of understanding because their brain is still under construction, the difference between public and private – with the Internet being as public as you can get and our bodies and sexuality being as private as you can get.

Emily: Every time you look at your phone, there's someone sexting you. And you can tell them to stop, but there's no way you can make them stop, right? It's more difficult to handle it almost because you can't get away from it.

Narrator: Sixteen-year-old Emily and her sister, thirteen-year-old Chloe, are trying to navigate their way through an X-rated culture. And that concerns their mom, Kim.

Kim Benson: They're bombarded with it. It's in every fiber of their social life. Part of the problem is they're not even understanding what it is. They're not understanding that they're being carried along in this wave of being sexualized.

Narrator: She should know. Back in the 80s, Kim could have been the poster girl for sexualization as a popular "Sunshine Girl" pinup in the Winnipeg Sun.

Kim Benson: Here's a picture. Yeah, I totally did it for attention. You know, if you get put in a paper and a magazine and everybody's going to look at you, you're popular, you're famous – that kind of thing.

Narrator: She's hoping her daughters don't follow in her footsteps. So every chance she gets, she points out sexualized content in pop culture.

Kim Benson: Katy Perry in "California Gurls," she's half naked, and she's humping cotton candy, shooting whipping cream from her cupcake breasts. And I always say to my girls, "You don't see Bono in a G-string humping cotton candy to sell his music."

ONE WAY TO BE FEMALE

Dr. Gail Dines: This is the first time ever you would be in a room full of people and they would all know who a so-called porn-star is.

Narrator: Author Gail Dines is also fighting back against sexualization. Here at Boston's Wheelock College, she shows her students how pop culture is fast becoming porn culture.

Dr. Gail Dines: Squeaky-clean Hannah Montana Miley Cyrus is aging out of Disney. What's she going to do? She has to be visible in a society populated by Lady Gaga, Beyoncé, Rihanna, all of those. They came out with this. And this marked the beginning of the reshaping of Miley Cyrus.

Narrator: This is the controversial tween angel Vanity Fair photo shoot that transformed Cyrus from Disney to diva. These photos of Cyrus, who was fifteen at the time, became the flash point in the debate over sexualization.

Dr. Gail Dines: And of course, the image with her father. Would you like to sit like that with your father? The S&M gear and the hypersexualized look. Now when you look at Miley Cyrus, what you see is someone who fits in seamlessly with the hypersexed society. And remember, to be visible you have two choices in a hypersexualized society. You're either fuckable or invisible. If you're thirteen today and you are an adolescent needing to figure out what it means to be female, and you're going to sift through all that's on offer by the culture, you only have one way of being female. The kind of Britney Spears, Paris Hilton image, which is this hypersexualized view. You have to either buy into that image or you going to choose invisibility for yourself, and you know what? It is developmentally out of step with adolescence to choose invisibility.

Paddy McCallum: You're in the band room dancing and then we cut to you dancing somewhere else, then we cut back...

Narrator: In the media studies class at Chatelech High School in Sechelt, B.C., these girls are making their own music video, emulating their idol Miley Cyrus.

Miley Cyrus: What's up guys, it's Miley. Just want to say hello to everyone...

Narrator: Like millions of teens, Miley connects using a webcam, creating a kind of friend-like intimacy with her legions of fans. Their idol may look more like a porn-star than a pop star, but that doesn't seem to bother them.

Paddy McCallum: They're not particularly shockable. Their tolerance for sexual imagery is very, very high. I suppose the question that arises in anyone's mind, whether you're a parent or a teacher or in the minds of some young people is, should there be a level of shockability?

Chatelech High School Teen Girl: Miley just got twitter, so every day I have her tweets sent to my phone, which is over there, and she, like, said she wasn't feeling well today but all of her fans tweeted her and they were just like, "Get better Miley." You know, it's cool.

Paddy McCallum: Now the challenge is more how to get kids to think critically about something that is very much part of their world. Very much bound up within their sense of community, and even within their sense of their bodies, their friendships, their relationships and their world. So there isn't that distance anymore between the media event and the viewer's experience of that event.

Narrator: And so girls don't see anything wrong with coming to school dressed much like their idols.

Paddy McCallum: It's no news to anybody working, and particularly in high schools, that the girls are often showing up – and you know the fashions change, things come and go – but the girls are often showing up dressed in a highly sexualized way.

Gail Dines: Our young girls, their backs are against a wall. There is one way to be female in this culture and it is a way that sets them up for all sorts of potential abuse.

ACTING SEXY FOR BOYS

Chatelech High School Teen Girl Montage: My name's Alexandra / Chloe / Dot / Callista / I'm thirteen / Twelve / Fifteen / Sixteen years old / and I've been called a slut / a bitch / ugly / ho / cunt / whore / a bitch / a bastard / and boys say bad things to me all the time. / They don't understand how hurtful the words are. / If you stay quiet about it too, you know, they'll just keep picking on you and bugging you. / You kind of get used to it after a

while, which is the sad thing. / It makes me feel bad. It makes me feel pretty bad about myself.

Narrator: As girls are bombarded with images that reinforce their value as sex objects, boys learn that's just how to treat them.

Dot: They want you to be a skinny little waist, perfect body, nice hair.

Alexandra: We have to become bustier at an earlier age, we have to have... Be very skinny at an earlier age, and look a specific way. And elementary going into high school? Because you gotta be perfect, you gotta be that girl that's gonna be standing out and like, "Oh I know her," and you have to be popular, when really you don't have to. You gotta be a kid.

Narrator: With the pressure to look sexy younger comes the pressure to act sexy younger.

Dr. Deborah Tolman: Showing yourself off as sexually empowered, as a performance, which is really what I think not all, but many, young women are doing. Many of them often drunk, certainly in the "Girls Gone Wild" videos, it really is a performance, and performance is not about your own body.

Narrator: The message? When girl meets boy, it's all about the boy.

Callista: Well, it says, "Decode his sex style." It's about her finding out how to please him other than him trying to please her. It's all about him apparently.

Dr. Gail Dines: Cosmopolitan is probably bought by the tweens market. And really the big issue in Cosmopolitan is how to give him mind-blowing orgasms. If you read Cosmopolitan, you would never know a woman has an orgasm.

Callista: In this picture, it's the guy on top of the girl. It says, "Getting on top might prove to be a tussle but a girl's gotta do." Like what? A 'girl's gotta do what a girl's gotta do'?

Narrator: In young teen, and even preteen circles, that often means oral sex.

Dot: Boys expect you to be into that. They expect you to be like, "Well, I expect this of you." And what if you're not comfortable doing that? What if you've never done that before? You don't know how. You've never grown up with it because you're a teenager, you're a child. You shouldn't know all that. But if you're in a relationship, and someone's pressuring you to do something like that, if you like the guy, you'll probably do it just for him.

Alexandra: And to make *him* happy.

Narrator: No wonder twenty-year-old Vanessa Fraser is so busy these days. As a sex blogger, she became the go-to girl for thousands of teens with questions about sex.

Ness Fraser: Girls – to give guys oral sex when they're thirteen and fourteen – there's really no pleasure in it for them other than being the girl that did that, and now this guy might like you or this guy might want to be your boyfriend.

Narrator: The more girls perform for the boys, the less they think about themselves.

Peggy Orenstein: I talked to one of the top researchers in girls and sexual desire and what she told me is that, increasingly, she's seeing that when she asks girls how an experience of arousal felt to them, they respond by telling her how they feel they looked. And she has to tell them that looking good is not a feeling.

Narrator: But when looking good and acting sexy transform their idols into superstars, teen girls can't help but get the dominant message in mainstream pop culture, "Act sexy for boys." So what's that say to boys?

Peggy Orenstein: Boys are completely steeped in this culture where girls' sexuality becomes a performance, and it distorts their view of what they're supposed to want and what they're supposed to look for in a girl.

Narrator: What boys look for now in a girl is often porn-star performance. And there's growing evidence they are getting it.

Dr. Ralph DiClemente: We find with teenage girls that twenty-two percent report anal sex within the past sixty days.

TEEN BOYS & PORN

Narrator: As the pressure to sexualize ever-younger girls intensifies, ever-younger boys also find themselves inundated with sexual imagery. In their favorite magazines, TV shows and hottest music videos. All offer up essentially what, a generation ago, was called "soft porn." But the game changer is hard-core. Not the kind that comes in a brown paper wrap. The kind that comes with the click of a mouse. The kind that teen boys can't get enough of.

Teen Boys: Probably at least three to four times a week. / Two or three times a week. / Every time you got a hard-on.

Dot: That's what they use their iPods for, they get the Wi-Fi. They just... It's everywhere.

Narrator: When it comes to confronting the issue of teen boys and porn, most parents believe it's about somebody else's kid. But with an estimated seventy to eighty percent of teen boys watching online porn, turns out it's pretty well everybody's kid.

Dr. Lucia O'Sullivan: Porn, in many ways, is becoming the super-educator in terms of sexual information.

Teen Boys: It was my first full-blown, fully naked chick. / Ok, the dudes on top of the girl, that's what sex is.

Paddy McCallum: If there's an elephant in the room right now that we're not talking about in schools, it's pornography. The amount of pornography that the boys are able to access; the young age at which they're accessing it.

Teen Boys: I wanna say grade four or five. / Six or seven, like I had a friend over at my house. / You type in "naked chicks" or "titties." It's that easy.

Narrator: The Internet makes porn affordable, accessible and anonymous. And just so easy for boys to find their favorite sites.

Teen Boys: "xandxx.com" / "pornhub.com" / "youporn.com" / "youjizz.com"

Narrator: No one really knows the effect hard-core porn has on kids, but there's an urgent need to find out. The key question...

Dr. Ralph DiClemente: Whether there is in fact a relationship between exposure to sexually explicit material and young people's behavior. We speculate there is, in fact, particularly for much younger folks. Fourteen, fifteen, thirteen.

Narrator: Six hundred American families with teenage boys, thirteen to seventeen, have allowed Dr. DiClemente to capture all the data off their home computers. The study will examine which websites they visit for how long and how often. Then he'll do follow-up interviews, tracking the teen boys' attitudes towards sex. The average thirteen year old has access to the kind of hard-core porn that, just a decade ago, was out of reach for most adults. It is full of offensive language. The sex depicted is often brutal, featuring acts like aggressive oral sex.

Dr. Gail Dines: And what they do often is they put a lot of mascara on her eyes so that her eyes are running, so you actually get evidence to see that she's gagging.

Narrator: And everywhere, anal sex. Experts fear the enormity of content and ease of access leaves young boys with a distorted idea of what sex is all about.

Dr. Ralph DiClemente: Here we are talking about sex and violence, and that's a very combustible combination for increasing the risk for young people.

Narrator: Girls know all too well what boys are watching.

Dot: People don't really talk about it because they're like, "Oh that's wrong." But I know lots of people who do that secretly and then it influence the way they act, the way they treat girls, and the way they look at girls.

Alexandra: It also changes them, their personality. It makes them usually a lot crueler because, when they look at this, they think, "I could get that."

Narrator: And there's growing evidence they are getting it. For instance, anal sex.

Peggy Orenstein: Anal is becoming the new oral so that the new way that girls prove that they're really sexually free and sexually entitled is by having anal sex.

Dr. Ralph DiClemente: In my own research here in Atlanta, we find with teenage girls that twenty-two percent report anal sex within the past sixty days. That's not in a year, that's in the past two months.

Ness Fraser: Young males and young females who watch porn are seeing that and are seeing the porn-stars are enjoying themselves, so obviously I would be enjoying myself as well.

Narrator: But how much does porn influence what goes on beyond the high school hallway? Dr. Lucia O'Sullivan's team is tracking a large sample of adolescents and early reports suggest young girls and women are having sex when they are not ready and getting hurt as a result.

Dr. Lucia O'Sullivan: They were having sexual intercourse without being sufficiently aroused. In fact, not aroused at all. And had little understanding that they needed to have lubrication for intercourse to be comfortable – penile-vaginal intercourse. Are young people really understanding what constitutes healthy, positive and comfortable sex?

Narrator: And since pretty well every porn-star shaves or gets a bikini wax, so now do most teenage girls. Just ask Gail Dines' students.

Dr. Gail Dines: They say, "You know here I was, twelve or thirteen – I didn't know what pornography was – and yet I was completely waxing and shaving. And I realize now that, at twelve or thirteen, pornography has shaped the way I thought about my body without even knowing what pornography was."

Narrator: Then there's Jenna Rose, the newest YouTube teen sensation. Only she's not even a teen. She's twelve. Her provocative performance in her online hit "O.M.G" caught the attention of Laci Green, whose YouTube channel about sex gets millions of hits.

Laci Green on YouTube: Chalk full of pseudo strip dances, hip swinging and some Victoria's angel-esque lingerie, "O.M.G" is a visual landscape of lusty twelve year olds. I feel creepy that those words are even coming out of my mouth.

Laci Green: It was a new low because I haven't really seen, up until this point, lingerie on children. It's not even just revealing clothing. It is clothing that has been culturally assigned for sexual situations, which is a pretty explicit message.

Narrator: And the launch of a French lingerie line designed for girls age four to twelve has sparked more outrage.

Laci Green: This creates a bridge to child pornography or, sort of, puts a damper on the exploitation factor of child pornography as if it's not really as bad as we've been thinking it is. So now we're just going to get one step closer. Get a little bit closer to, at this point, making children out to be like adults and to be sexualized in a way that adults have been sexualized.

Narrator: While pop culture presents little girls as little women, porn goes to great lengths to portray young women as prepubescent.

Dr. Lucia O'Sullivan: There seems to be a greater emphasis, more than ever in pornography, on the 'barely legal' or teens. Even to the point with the hairlessness, and the girls with pigtailed and everything they do to make them look as young as possible.

Narrator: Coming up, it's not only pornographers who sexualize young people. Thanks to smart phones, kids can do it themselves.

Dot: The boy I was sexting was in grade eight. He thought it would be funny if he'd send it to ten of his friends.

Narrator: Social media makes it possible not only to consume sexualized images 24/7 but to produce them with often disastrous consequences for kids.

Dot: My heart just dropped. I was, like, how many people have seen me like this?

SOCIAL MEDIA

Narrator: Probably the last thing you'll ever see a teenager do on a phone is actually talk on it. While teenage boys now send about 2,500 texts per month, girls send more than 4,000. That's an average of 135 texts a day. And then there are those who send a few more.

Teen Girl: My mom checked my last phone bill. I had 17,000 texts received and sent in a month.

Narrator: Most teen girls either text about boys or to boys. Call it today's version of pillow talk.

Teen Girl: We, like, literally text each other every second since he added me on Facebook.

Narrator: Since Facebook is the place where so many teen relationships begin, social media has made being sexy online as important as it is in person.

Dr. Susannah Stern: They are oftentimes now repackaging their representations of themselves to fit the mass-mediated model of beauty, popularity, of sexuality.

Narrator: But all that time in the virtual world can make girls feel closer to boys they barely know in real life.

Dr. Lucia O'Sullivan: Computer-mediated communication tends to accelerate intimacy in a lot of ways. You're not immediately in front of someone so you're somewhat less self-conscious. So people report feeling very close to someone that they don't know very well, very quickly.

Narrator: According to Dr. Lucia O'Sullivan, girls who text the most are also the most likely to experiment sexually.

Dr. Lucia O'Sullivan: 'Hypertexters,' those who are people really in the top one-quarter of texting frequency, had a four times greater chance of a number of different sexual experiences a year later than did their same age peers.

Narrator: O'Sullivan's research also suggests texting primes the pump for sexting. In her survey, almost thirty percent of teens admit to sending a naked or near naked picture of themselves to a crush. But what happens when that picture goes viral? In middle school, three of these four girls sent nude or seminude photos of themselves to boys.

Dot: I was in grade seven. He thought it would be funny if he'd send it to ten of his friends. And then when I got to high school, it came up when I was in grade eight and someone actually showed me the picture. And that was horrible. My heart just dropped. I was like, how many people have seen me like this? I regret so much of that night. That year was hard, and I had a lot of people calling me names like that, and they had proof on their cellphones of what I did. And I can't take that back ever.

Dr. Susannah Stern: We also have to understand that a young person doing this isn't a bad kid. Isn't doing something bad in their minds but is doing something that feels very comfortable, probably safer, than having some kind of real sexual encounter.

Alexandra: I met this one guy and we started talking and then he asked me, "Can I have a picture?" And I said "yes." And I wasn't fully naked. I was in a bra. But that picture went not only through a lot of my friends but a lot of my family. And a lot of those people also passed on that picture and also still hold it against me.

Dr. Susannah Stern: Adults do so much hand wringing because they look at individual girls, and oftentimes their parents, and say, "How could you do such a thing? Why would you do such a thing?" And it's not shocking to me at all. I mean if you look across our culture, everything is saying, "Promote yourself, flaunt yourself, exhibit yourself." If young people weren't picking up on that message, they're missing the dominant mainstream message to young people today.

Teen Girl: It was embarrassing. It's embarrassing when that's your body with no clothes on in front of everyone and everyone sees you. And everyone sees you like that until that's gone, and it never really is, so... And it hurts.

Jesse Miller: How many of you on Facebook have over a hundred friends? Over three hundred? Over four?

Narrator: It's a story that is all too familiar to social media expert Jesse Miller. He teaches grade seven and eight students across British Columbia about the downside of being sexy on social media. And even he is shocked by what kids are willing to show and tell online.

Jesse Miller: More and more I'm seeing content where kids are saying, "You know, this is me. And this is me in this private environment."

Narrator: Unsettling to most parents, to most kids 'private' is increasingly public. Partly because private often means any place their parents aren't. Often that's online.

Dr. Lucia O'Sullivan: We think that they equate being private about something with being ashamed about something. They're not ashamed of their sexual lives. That's actually a very refreshing trend in this sexual world in many regards. But a consequence of that is there's almost no privacy in their sexual lives.

Narrator: By explaining life before the Internet, Jesse Miller tries to make kids understand just because technology makes it easy to do something doesn't make it smart.

Jesse Miller: If I want to take a photo of myself, the first thing I had to do was buy a roll of film. I take 24 pictures of myself in front of my bathroom mirror. Then I take that film and I go to the store. They give me 24 photos that are printed on paper and I turn to him and say, "You know what? I would like to give you one of those photos. Feel free to write comments on the back. Feel free to 'like' this." But if every photo you took on your digital camera, mom and dad got an instant copy of on their phone, would you take as many pictures? Would you take photos the same way?

Narrator: And if that doesn't make kids sit up and take notice, this usually does...

Jesse Miller: If you were anybody and you have a photo or a video of a child underneath the age of eighteen wearing less than a bathing suit on one of your laptops, iPhones, iPods, whatever it is – you are in possession of child pornography and that is a crime.

News Clip: Six teenagers at Greensburg-Salem High School now face charges of child pornography.

Parry Aftab on Early Exclusive: Kids who are sending naked pictures of themselves voluntarily to each other are now being charged as registered sex offenders.

Narrator: These days the sexploits of kids are fodder for the nightly news across North America. In B.C., a number of teens face child pornography charges after posting pictures to Facebook of a sixteen year old girl allegedly being gang-raped at a rave.

Teen Boy: I don't think she was as messed up as she's making it out to be.

Teen Boy: She's trying to turn it to make it sound like she's a victim of something, rather than to say that she did something and that she knows it was incredibly idiotic.

Narrator: Even after the pictures were removed and police told kids to stop blaming the victim, the attacks and the name-calling continued on social media. So lawmakers are exploring new criminal charges to control what's known as "aggravated sexting": when naked pictures are circulated as a form of bullying or harassment.

Dot: I know that a lot of those kids have past pictures of me, and I've confronted them about that. And for my knowledge most of them, and probably all of them, are deleted. It just makes me, when I think about it, makes me feel a lot safer and a lot stronger inside.

Narrator: In spite of living in a hypersexualized world, girls still hold out hope for a happily ever after ending.

Paddy McCallum: They want the romance. They want to be loved.

HAPPILY EVER AFTER?

Narrator: In less than a week, school is out for the summer so the kids at Chatelech High School in Sechelt reluctantly drag themselves to class.

Paddy McCallum: [reading] "Had we but world and enough in time / This coineth lady were no crime / Rather at once..."

Narrator: Paddy McCallum is hoping seventeenth century romantic poets will capture the attention of his distracted students.

Paddy McCallum: [reading] "We would sit down and think which way to walk and past our long loved day..."

Narrator: The language may be different, but to the girls the message is the same.

Chatelech High School Girl: It's just a really pretty, spiffy, poetic version of what guys are all still saying today.

Paddy McCallum: And what is that?

Chatelech High School Girl: "Give us the sex!"

Chatelech High School Girl: Girls are just growing up so quickly and boys are and everyone's looking at porn now because it's so available to everyone, and the romance is... There's no romance there.

Paddy McCallum: The girls are really feeling that, and they're holding out this hope that, in spite of all the porn, and in spite of all the requests that are being made on them, somewhere in there, there is still the possibility of romance. There is still the possibility of mystery and love and passion.

Narrator: But passion and romance aren't just for girls. Sex researcher Lucia O'Sullivan has studied the yearnings of both genders and the results may surprise you.

Dr. Lucia O'Sullivan: What we found, actually, is that both young men and women have a much stronger, more positive association toward romance than sex. Men in fact didn't show this bias towards sex.

Narrator: But even if they crave romance, porn may rob them of their ability to enjoy it.

Dr. Ralph DiClemente: They've gotten some phone calls, one from a young man whose now in his twenties, who told me that he used to spend a lot of time watching online pornography. And he says now he can't have a real relationship. "I just can't. I just don't get excited." So he's actually taking this fictional relationship that he's seen on the net and he's elevated those in his mind as, 'these are normal relationships, healthy relationships.'

Narrator: To bloggers like Vanessa Fraser, the solution is clear. Real romance and intimacy will return when both boys and girls can embrace a healthy sexuality.

Ness Fraser: We need to teach girls that it's, first of all, that's it's okay to want to have sex. That it's totally okay to be enthusiastic. Making that firm decision doesn't make you a slut. It doesn't make you promiscuous. It makes you a woman who's taking charge of her own sexuality.

Laci Green on YouTube: Guilt is a type of shame. It's shame about yourself, your partner, about your relationship, about your experiences.

Laci Green: When I was twelve, I would have liked to have had a strong communication system about sexuality and relationships with my parents. And I wished that it wasn't so taboo and stigmatized. I wish that I wasn't made to feel so ashamed of it and guilty about it.

Ness Fraser: Very few teenagers are lucky enough to live in a household where there is an open dialogue about sex.

Kim Benson: Do you feel pressured?

Chloe: Sometimes.

Kim Benson: To do certain things?

Emily: There will always be those kinds of pressures and everyone makes mistakes. Even though they know against their better judgment they make mistakes, and I think that's just part of being a teenager.

Narrator: Back at the Benson home in Squamish, Kim strives to keep the open dialogue going. The former pin-up sets the stage for tough talks.

Kim Benson: As a parent you can think of it as a privilege that you're child has come to you with these questions. You're privileged to have the opportunity to teach your child. So, no judgment.

Narrator: And because her kids don't feel judged, they're able to admit when they've made mistakes.

Emily: Yeah, I feel safe to fuck up. And I have fucked up. And I've told her. And it's all good.

Narrator: Paddy McCallum's grade twelves have also made their share of mistakes. Their final media studies assignment is a message to younger students to resist the pressure to sexualize themselves. To hold on to what matters most – a childhood.

Class Montage: To my twelve year old self. . . / Hitting puberty is not a race! / Confidence is sexy. / Don't diet, you're just a kid! / Real boobs feel way better than fake ones. / Stay a kid for as long as you can. / Stand up for what you believe in, stand up for yourself. / Take back your beauty. / Be different to be you. / Prince Charming does really exist; just he doesn't quite look like what you think. Keep your eyes open.

[END]