

BACKGROUNDER



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Hypersexualized: The Scary Trend in Children's Dance *Background Information*

The problem

In children's dance classes around the nation, young children are learning to dance with choreography that hypersexualizes them and their bodies. These children have become covert victims of sexual exploitation in what used to be a safe place – the dance studio. Children's dance is being distorted and the art form of dance is being hijacked.

These studios/teachers often unknowingly model their movement choices on what they see in the media culture. This cultural shift is the difference between healthy, age-appropriate dance versus unhealthy, age-inappropriate dance. Booty pops, lip-licking, finger licking/sucking, breast or groin stroking, obscene gestures, suggestive grinding, and seductive props and looks are becoming more commonplace in children's dance.

The impact

Recent research shows that most girls – as young as 6-years old – are beginning to think of themselves as sex objects. According to the Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls, the effects of the sexualization of children is widespread:

- Body Dysmorphia
- Eating Disorders
- Poor Academic Performance
- Promiscuity
- Higher Risk of Abusive Relationships
- Unable to Identify Sexual Abuse

Girls' sexual development is being hijacked. The culture invites them to imitate the porn-style dance moves of their favorite stars. Yet, they do not have the emotional sophistication to understand what they are seeing and doing. (Source: Canadian Women's Health Network)

More research and data pertaining to the impact of hypersexualized children's dance is available on www.danceawareness.com.

From the Experts

"Over the years we've seen a massive transition from what once was acceptable and normal within dance and adolescence compared to what we are seeing on the stage today. Young girls are hypersexualized, objectified onstage and it's being portrayed as normal and natural and younger and younger girls are watching what they're seeing on television, they're seeing all that they're exposed to in the media and they want to portray that." Clay Olsen, President and Co-Founder 'Fight the New Drug'

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“Children who don’t understand the difference between healthy dance and over-sexualized dance, or healthy behaviors and over-sexualized behaviors, that they might view in pornography or other ways, are more prone to being victims. And I see that all the time in my community where women have been groomed through dance and through other cultural ways to think of themselves as objects, to think of themselves as less than human, and it harms them emotionally for life.” Anne Blythe, M.Ed, Founder of Betrayal Trauma Recovery

DA:NCE Goals

1. To protect children from hypersexualization in adult costumes, choreography and music, and to protect the art of dance
2. To create free research materials to give adults informed choices about the differences between healthy or harmful dance
3. To engage in respectful conversations about hypersexualization without shaming/demonizing adults or dance studios so that there is a path for reflection and changed perspectives
4. To communicate the hypersexualization of children in dance and its connection to the public health issue of pornography with bipartisan engagement

Resources

As awareness grows, dance educators, parents and concerned citizens are speaking out against this cultural shift toward normalizing the hypersexualization of children in dance. Free resources to educate and grow awareness are available at danceawareness.com, including:

- A 4-minute video highlighting the damaging effects of hypersexualized children’s dance
- A free eBook that explains the problem and offers solutions
- A free educational PowerPoint and in-depth videos for people to use in their outreach efforts
- Resources for parents to find and select healthy, age-appropriate dance studios

Important Links

- APA Report: www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report
- Canadian Women’s Health Network: www.cwhn.ca/en/hypersexualizationprimer
- Introduction to DA:NCE (NRB 2019 Convention): <https://youtu.be/CCoBSdvUwSk>
- 4-minute DA:NCE trailer: <https://youtu.be/wkXwcLVgoRg>
- DA:NCE (Dance Awareness No Child Exploited): www.danceawareness.com

Interviews

To schedule an interview with Mary Bawden, founder of DA:NCE, email mary@soultolecholeography.org or call 909-793-8925.