

# Young girls in the media

[Media](#)



Never before has the sexualisation of girls in the media been as prominent, explicit and had such lasting harm on girls and women. 9 out of 10 girls say the fashion industry and the media place a lot of pressure on teenage girls to be thin (spark summit video). Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to have this opportunity to present my seminar to you on how the innocence of young females is exploited and sexualised in popular culture, particularly in advertising. It is recognised that Australians now spend in excess of 89 hours per week or almost 80 per cent of their waking hours consuming media (who 2012).

The sexualisation of girls has been a topic of interest to many over past years, from the 1953 creation of the Barbie doll, the 2001 epidemic of BRATZ dolls, to the controversial perfume advertisements Daisy and OH LOLA! By Marc Jacobs; enforces the representation that young females are positioned to be sexual objects. The unrealistic representations of young women as sexual objects which is portrayed within the social media, is not only harmful to girls, but is also harmful to the wider community. But what exactly is sexualisation?

Sexualisation refers to make sexual, endow with sex, or attribute sex to (Princeton. edu), not something that is commonly associated with when making reference to young women and children. Sexualisation is ever present in modern media and we are susceptible to images of women and children where the emphasis is on attraction, appeal, and seductiveness. The increasing sexualisation of the society in which we live, with a specific focus on female gender representation, plays an influential role as to how young women portray and perceive themselves.

The images of women we see in mainstream media portrays to a child that they should convey a higher level of sexual maturity far beyond their years in order to be considered attractive and beautiful. These fascinations can cause severe social implications for young girls, which can potentially be harmful. This in turn can shape our ideologies and beliefs as to what it means to be a woman and the need to conform with society. Advertising plays an integral role in the popularity of a particular product and this is created through the use of numerous sense alluring factors such as colour, sound and the overall physical attraction of the product.

In 1953 the fictitious character Barbara Roberts was born into society, commonly known as Barbie, Barbie portrays the pre-conceived perfect connotation of physical appearance being tall, blonde and blue-eyed and living a luxurious lifestyle complete with a hot pink Ferrari. The advertisements for Barbie are gender specific targeting specifically females, this is insinuated through the use of the colour pink throughout the entire advertisement connoting a dream-like land of endless clothes, shoes and pink glitter which you can only experience if you purchase and play with a Barbie doll.

It is estimated that over a billion Barbie dolls have been sold worldwide in over 150 countries, with three Barbie dolls being sold every second (Barbie.com). Not only is Barbie tall, thin and physically attractive, she has access to every luxury item imaginable to counterpart her so-called perfect life. To further highlight the connotation of Barbie, the exceedingly attractive and deemed perfect boyfriend, Ken Carson, also accompanies her promoting to

young girls that in order to advance in life you must be either married or have a boyfriend.

This unrealistic and completely inaccurate depiction of reality only further entices severe social implications, and promotes girls to dress in attire far beyond their years. Barbie dolls are predominantly targeted to innocent young girls between the ages of 6-12, influencing what they believe they should look like, and what kind of life they should lead. Perfumes are the perfect ground for aesthetically pleasing advertisements as it cements in the viewers mind what to expect when they wear the desired perfume. The Oh LOLA!

Perfume advert from Marc Jacobs, starring teenage actress Dakota Fanning was pulled in the United Kingdom ruling that the imagery is guilty of sexualising a child (research reference here). The full name of Jacob's fragrance is LOLITA, the word Lolita means a sexually precocious young girl; a young girl who has a very sexual appearance and behaves in a very sexual way. The model is seen to be wearing a short pale coloured lace dress with the hem raised to the mid thigh, holding up the renowned fragrance shaped like a vase holding a blooming pink flower which rests in her lap between her legs.

There are connotations regarding the strategic and sexual undertone to the placement of the flower. As to the professed age of the model, she looks exceedingly young, this is used to sexualise and exploit the innocence of children consequently preying on a child's lack of knowledge. This is in turn demeans and demoralises women through denoting them to have child look attributes. Marc Jacobs refers to his Oh LOLA ad as sensual and seductive.

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However the meticulous choice of actress also influences the audience's view as she appears young and innocent.

Advertising for his following perfume Daisy also generated fierce debate as to the sexualisation of the young female models as they are seen reclining provocatively on horses, smiling suggestively at the camera whilst wearing transparent dresses. The music accompanying the ad “ Dream A Little Dream Of Me” is also very evocative and further promotes the sexual nature of the advertisement. {DAISY VIDEO} Overall this advertisement presents an unjust view of females in the media by sexualising them through portraying women as objects rather than people.

Studies have proven that these negative images in the media and the messages they send have significant impacts on the lives of young people. Mental health professionals are increasingly disturbed about the popularity of sexualised images in the media encompassing children and young adolescents displaying traits originally associated with adult sexuality (apa.org). The unrealistic representations of gender particularly that of young women portrayed in the media is not only harmful to girls themselves but also to the wider community.

The exploitation of girls as sexual objects can provide insufficient development of the adolescent brain mounting the risk of depression, eating disorders, low self-esteem and self worth and even teensuicide, impacting children and their families (who 2012). Furthermore, 31% of girls admit to starving themselves in order to loose weight (spark summit video). These images are detrimental to an adolescent mind as it promotes belief that physical beauty and sexual attractiveness is expected in our society.

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It is clear ladies and gentleman from these examples, and the medical research that the media, fashion and marketing industries aim to achieve profit by glorifying the most unrealistic body types, despite the fact that this encourages innocent and naive young children to regard this as an ideal image to strive towards. It is without a doubt that the media is aware of what are they promoting regardless of age as many people conform to the idea that sex sells.

The construction of sexualised advertisements and images influences girls to dress and act sexy and seductively as it is considered the social norm and acceptable within society. Therefore I urge you, as members of the Australian Media Council and Advertising Bureau, to shift towards a more diverse representation of women in popular culture, advertising and media texts; that lure away from the sexualisation and innocence exploitation of young women. This will not only assist young women, but all of society to rise above the limiting expectations and social implications of this form of marketing.