Sexualisation of Girls in Music Videos and Girls' Magazine Advertisements: Prevalence and Consequences

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Abstract

Sexualisation occurs when (a) a person's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behaviours to the exclusion of other characteristics; (b) a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy; (c) a person is sexually objectified (made into a thing for sexual use by others) rather than seen as a person capable of independent action and decision making; and/or (d) sexuality is inappropriately imposed on someone (e.g., children) (American Psychological Association, 2007). The mass media is one of the most prolific transmitters of sexualised cultural messages. In 2007, the American Psychological Association (APA) created a taskforce concerning the sexualisation of girls in response to concerns that their sexualisation has become a broad and increasing practice in our culture and is harmful to them. The taskforce found conclusive evidence that, regardless of media genre (e.g., magazines, television), women are routinely sexualised. However, APA reported that few studies have examined the prevalence of sexualisation of girls in the media. Research has shown sexualisation to have multiple negative effects on women, including (a) decreased mental and sexual health (e.g., body image, self-esteem, depression, eating disorders, unsafe sexual practices) and (b) harmful societal attitudes and beliefs (e.g., gender stereotypes, acceptance of violence). However, research examining the influence of sexualisation on girls is less well developed and, therefore, inconclusive. Nonetheless, results concerning women may well generalize to girls. From the standpoint of developmental theory, girls may be even more affected than women by sexualised portrayals in the media because their identity and sense of self (i.e., self-esteem) are still being formed. The purpose of this research was to (a) assess the frequency with which girls are sexualised in two influential types of media; (b) determine if such sexualisation has increased over time; and (c) explore directly with girls the consequences of

viewing sexualised images on them. First, quantitative content analysis of magazine advertisements and music videos was conducted to assess the prevalence of sexualisation of girls from 1992-2008 and to determine if a higher proportion of images of girls (i.e., females under the age of 18) in girls' magazine advertisements and music videos have been sexualised in recent years than in previous years. The content analysis data was analyzed using proportion and chi-square analyses. Second, focus groups were held with girls in grade 6, 9, and 12 to qualitatively assess how they make meaning of, and are influenced by, sexualised media messages involving girls. Focus group data was thematically analyzed. The quantitative data shows how intensely girls are being targeted. Overall, in magazine advertisements from 1992-1998, 64% of teenagers and 24% of children were sexualised. Comparatively, in music videos, 53% of teenagers and 13% of children were sexualised. Chi-square analyses indicated that the proportion of sexualised girls in both Seventeen magazine and music videos has increased from 1992-2008. The qualitative data shows how girls understand and respond to being targeted in this way. Girls across grades indicated that they are very aware of being immersed in media that sexualizes girls. They reported that exposure to this media makes them feel negatively about themselves and that they feel pressured to imitate it, both in terms of altering their appearance (e.g., to resemble the sexualised females) and their behaviour (e.g., sexual behaviour with boys). Together these two studies indicate that there is evidence to be concerned with the increasing prevalence of sexualised girls in the media and the negative effect this may have on adolescent girls. The results indicate that prevention efforts may well be needed to help girls mitigate the potential negative effects and shed light on the mechanisms of influence that should be diminished (when negative) or strengthened (when positive).

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North American girls (i.e., females under the age of 18) are growing up in a society in which, on one hand, they are given the message that they may achieve at high levels educationally and professionally (Choate & Curry, 2009). Yet, on the other hand, they are simultaneously receiving strong cultural messages that sexually objectify females, and portray them according to sexualised stereotypes (American Psychological Association, 2007; Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn, & Thompson, 2001; Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013). When girls' worth is reduced to their value as a sexual object to be admired or used by others, they are sexualised and subsequently devalued (Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn, & Thompson, 2001; Choate & Curry, 2009; Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013).

The mass media is one of the most prolific transmitters of cultural messages sexualising girls and women (Choate & Curry, 2009; Roberts, 2013). Cultural messages that sexualise girls have been widely decried by psychologists, educators, social critics, and others (American Psychological Association, 2007; Bissonnette, 2007; Machia & Lamb, 2009; Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013). Nonetheless, sexualised media messages and images of girls are easy to find (Durham, 2008; Merskin, 2004; Levin & Kilbourne, 2008;). For example, former child star Miley Cyrus (now age 20) made headlines (e.g., McGill, 2013) for her sexualised performances during the 2013 Music Video Award (MVA) show. In one of her performances, Cyrus was on stage thrusting her pelvis and sticking out her tongue, wearing a bikini with a furry child-like teddy bear on it, while teddy bears were dancing around her. As another example, the website *genderads.com* displays a number of images of sexualised children, particularly girls, in popular advertising (Lukas, 2002). Some of the ads market seductive clothing to children, such as thong-

underwear with the expression “wink wink.” Similarly, in music videos, teen singer Christina Aguilera, wearing only underwear and chaps, grinds her body around in mud with a group of nearly naked young people in the video for her song “Drrty” (Levin & Kilbourne, 2008). These mass media images are disturbing and raise a number of important questions regarding the exploitation of girls in the media, namely what is the prevalence of the sexualisation of girls, has it been increasing, what messages do these images send to girls, and how do girls receive them?

Conceptualization of Sexualisation of Girls

For this thesis, the term female is used to refer to both girls (females under the age of 18) and women (females 18 and older). Girls are further defined as children (age 12 and younger; pre-puberty) and adolescents (age 13-17).

The American Psychological Association (APA) (2007) defines sexualisation as consisting of four inter-related components (Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013; Szymanksi, Carr, & Moffit, 2010). These are: (a) a person’s value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behaviours to the exclusion of other characteristics; (b) a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy; (c) a person is sexually objectified (made into a thing for sexual use by others) rather than seen as a person capable of independent action and decision making; and/or (d) sexuality is inappropriately imposed on someone (e.g., children). Any one of these four components is sufficient for sexualisation to be present. APA states that the four components of their definition of sexualisation are not necessarily mutually exclusive and provides several examples of sexualisation of girls to help clarify their definition. Examples of the four components of sexualisation are found in Appendix A.

It is important to recognize that sexualisation may be differentiated from healthy sexuality, which involves intimacy, bonding, and shared pleasure through mutual respect

between adult partners (APA, 2007; Durham, 2008; Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013). Therefore, sexualisation is not viewed as conducive to healthy sex, nor is it being argued that there is simply too much sex in modern culture. As Levin and Kilbourne (2008) put it, “sex in commercial culture has far more to do with trivializing and objectifying sex than with promoting it, more to do with consuming than with connecting” (p. 9). Therefore, age-appropriate exposure to information about sex (e.g., young children learning correct names of body parts) is not sexualisation.

It is also is important to recognize that sexualisation of girls exists on a continuum, with less extreme forms (e.g., looking at someone in a sexualised way) on one end and more extreme forms (e.g., sexual harassment, violence) on the other (APA, 2007; Choate & Curry, 2009; Hatch, 2011). The continuum represents the level or degree to which girls are being valued primarily for their physical attributes and treated like sexual objects. At the extreme end, girls who are victims of sexual harassment and violence are being literally treated as objects to be consumed, controlled, and violated (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Hatch, 2011).

Substantial evidence exists that women in particular are regularly sexualised (APA, 2007). At the extreme end, there is evidence that female models are more often than male models placed in submissive, sexually exploitive, and violent positions (i.e., strong sexualisation) (APA, 2007; Hatch, 2011). For example, Levy (2005) and others argue that women and adolescent girls are being “pornographized” in music videos and song lyrics. That is, they are being portrayed in ways that normalize and resemble pornography, prostitution, and “stripper culture” in a way that emphasizes voyeurism and is in service of boys and men. There is some anecdotal evidence that this portrayal is being sold to young girls too (e.g., pole dancing kits sold as toys to little girls) (Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013).

In 2007, the American Psychological Association (APA) published the results of their taskforce concerning the sexualisation of girls. Their report stimulated publication of subsequent reviews of empirical and theoretical work concerning the problem of sexualisation of girls and its potential negative influence on their health and development (e.g., Choate and Curry, 2009; Coy, 2009; Hatch, 2011; Levin and Kilbourne, 2008; Szymanski et al., 2010; Olfman, 2009). These reviews, as well as the APA taskforce report, have documented sexualisation of women and girls across a wide range of media aimed at both age groups. Their authors have concluded that, regardless of media genre (e.g., magazines, television), women are routinely sexualised. For example, in one content analysis, 84% of sampled primetime television programs contained at least one incident of extreme forms of sexualisation, such as sexual harassment including sexist comments, physical advances (pinching, fondling), or rape (Grauerholz & King, 1997). However, far fewer studies have examined the sexualisation of girls specifically (APA, 2007; Hatch, 2011; Levin and Kilbourne, 2008). One exception is Merskin's (2004) qualitative analysis of the sexualised portrayals of girls in fashion advertising. Merskin described the messages being sent in ads containing girls. For example, in one ad, a blond adolescent girl is shown wearing a blue lace bra and g-string bikini panties. Merskin states that her body is positioned in a way that communicates she is willing and available for sexual activity.

Past research involving women has shown sexualisation to have multiple negative effects on them, including (a) decreased mental and sexual health (e.g., body image, self-esteem, depression, eating disorders, unsafe sexual practices) and (b) harmful societal attitudes and beliefs (e.g., gender stereotypes, acceptance of violence) (APA, 2007; Choate & Curry, 2009; Hatch, 2011; Tiggemann, 2011). Research examining the influence of sexualisation on girls has been rare, but the results of the studies of women may well generalize to them.

Developmentally, adolescent girls may be even more affected than women by sexualised portrayals in the media because girls' identity and their sense of self (self-esteem) are still being formed (APA, 2007; Choate & Curry, 2009; Levin & Kilbourne, 2008).

Adolescent girls, in particular, are at-risk of problems associated with sexualisation (Choate & Curry, 2009). In comparison to boys, adolescent girls disproportionately experience eating disorders, depression, body dissatisfaction, and low self-esteem, all consequences associated with sexualisation (e.g., APA, 2007; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2002). For example, Littleton and Ollendick (2003) reported that negative body image and body dissatisfaction, experienced predominantly among females, peaks during early adolescence. Levine and Smolak (2002) found that body dissatisfaction is so widespread amongst adolescent girls that it is best characterized as "normative discontent." Arguably, media models for girls that reduce them to sexual objects, as well as messages that devalue girls according to limiting sexual stereotypes, hinders the accomplishment of important developmental tasks, such as creating a healthy, constructive sense of self. This puts adolescent girls at-risk of multiple negative health consequences (APA, 2007).

Since the APA (2007) report, a handful of empirical research has been published in response to its call for research on the sexualisation of girls specifically (e.g., what is the prevalence of sexualisation of girls in the media and what are the consequences of sexualisation for girls?) (Goodin, Van Denburg, Murnen, & Smolak; 2011; Grabe & Hyde, 2009; Graff, Murnen, & Krause, 2013; Machia & Lamb, 2009; Starr & Ferguson, 2012). Nonetheless, as Hatch (2011) points out in her review of the APA (2007) taskforce report and subsequent publications, research concerning the sexualisation of girls specifically is still sorely needed.

In addition to new research on the sexualisation of girls (e.g., Goodin et al., 2011), there have also been critiques of the APA (2007) report, as well as new literature that has raised issues

to consider in future research (e.g., Gill, 2012; Lerum & Dworkin; 2009; Thompson, 2010). Thompson (2010) critiques the APA (2007) report and other literature (e.g., Olfman, 2009) for being "adult-centric." Adult-centric refers to the assumption that children share the same meaning that adults attribute to particular behaviours and understand those behaviours in adult terms. Thompson promotes a more nuanced and qualitatively-informed (e.g., ethnographic) discussion about the relationship between childhood, the media, and sexualisation. She calls for ethnographic (qualitative) research with girls to understand their perspectives on what adults view as sexualised behaviour, such as dressing, dancing, and posing provocatively. Thompson argues that behaviour APA (2007) and others (e.g., Olfman, 2009) consider inappropriate for children (i.e., to represent sexualisation) is based on a negative adult construction of sexualised behaviours as harmful. In her view, sexualised behaviour by girls could be understood as the harmless mimicking of behaviours associated with adults, de-contextualized from adult meanings. Thompson compares this mimicking of sexualised behaviour to how little girls play with kitchen sets. It is possible that young girls understand sex and sexualised behaviour in different ways than adults and in as many different ways as do adults. Therefore, qualitative research such as ethnography with children is required to determine the extent to which they appropriate adult behaviour and make it meaningful in and on their own terms. That is, research is needed with children to identify their beliefs and opinions.

Another criticism of the APA report (2007) and other writings in this area (e.g., Olman, 2009), made by Gill (2012) and others (e.g., Lerum & Dworkin, 2009), is the seeming presumption that sexualised images of girls and women necessarily lead to negative consequences. Gill (2012) and Lerum and Dworkin (2009), point to feminist concepts of empowerment, agency, and choice, arguing sexualising images and behaviours (e.g., pole

dancing, burlesque) may be considered through these lenses. They call for research to determine how sexualised media messages and images are negotiated by girls and if they only have negative consequences. Although these authors agree that there is ample evidence to confirm many negative consequences of sexualisation for women, they challenge the central thesis that sexualisation be labelled as a harmful and dangerous process with only negative impacts; it might have some positive consequences for some girls and women.

Relatedly, Lerum and Dworkin (2009) and Gill (2012) also argue that APA (2007) doesn't go far enough in pointing out the intricacies in how media images are understood and responded to by girls. In their opinion, girls don't just blindly imitate and mimic this media. They criticize the APA report as lacking adequate attention to girls as active consumers and interpreters of media. Girls are engaged social actors embedded in family, friends, school and other networks (Lerum & Dworkin, 2009). Therefore, research is needed to better understand the complexities in how girls understand and negotiate these media images and messages in a way that takes into consideration their own voice, choice, and agency (Gill, 2012; Lerum & Dworkin, 2009). A more sophisticated understanding of girls and how they are influenced, make decisions about, and negotiate this media is needed. Research and scholarship that depicts and encompasses a sense of young people as active, engaged, and critical media users is called for. This is similar to Thompson's (2010) call for qualitative research to provide a better understanding of girls' subjective meanings and nuanced interpretations. Thompson (2010) suggests that qualitative research is an avenue for better understanding how girls interpret and react to this media, which may or may not be negative.

Another point of contention authors such as Gill (2012) have had with APA (2007) is that the report is written in a way that views the media as monolithic and homogenous. Gill (2012)

says that there is a diversity of different media platforms, genres, and products. She argues that the APA report (2007) discusses girls' time spent "with the media" without making any distinctions between different kinds of media or how they are used (e.g., watched, listened to, or read). Gill suggests that there may be differences and contradictions in sexualised messages across the media content. She argues that research is needed to better understand the prevalence of sexualised images of girls in the media and if it is increasing, across multiple media outlets (e.g., media that is read versus watched) consumed by girls.

Lastly, Lerum and Dworkin (2009) state that APA (2007) does not do a good enough job of specifying what sexualised images and messages are found in the media and what types are most present (e.g., images of women dressed in ways that sexualizes girls; images that are exploitive and violent, etc.). Research is needed regarding specific types of sexualising images of girls (e.g., on a continuum from mild to strong; women portrayed in a way that sexualize girls). They point out some types of images might "stick" more with viewers, so it is necessary to assess the prevalence of different types.

Purpose of the Current Research

The purpose of this thesis was to respond to some of the gaps identified in the above literature, namely that few studies have examined media sexualisation of girls or how girls respond to, and are influenced by, sexualised media (APA, 2007; Hatch, 2011; Levin & Kilbourne, 2008). More specifically, this study responded to some of the recommendations put forth by APA (2007) on the basis of their taskforce findings, as well as the areas for future research pointed out by more recent reviews and criticisms of APA (2007) and other writings in this area (e.g., Levin & Kilbourne, 2008; Olfman, 2009). APA (2007) recommended that psychologists conduct research to (a) document the frequency with which girls are sexualised in

various media; (b) determine if it is increasing; and (c) examine consequences of viewing sexualised images on girls (e.g., how it influences girls' ideas about femininity, to what extent do they feel pressured to imitate it) (Hatch, 2011; Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013). Gill (2012), as well as Lerum and Dworkin (2009), recommend documenting the frequency of various forms of sexualisation (e.g., strong sexualisation, images of adult women portrayed in ways that sexualize girls) in multiple media outlets (i.e., media that is read by girls vs. media that is watched). Thompson (2009) and others (e.g., Gill, 2012) identified qualitative research as particularly important to understand how girls respond to, and are influenced by, sexualised media messages.

In response to the above recommendations, first a quantitative content analysis was conducted in two media forms of the prevalence of sexualised images of girls (including strong examples of sexualisation specifically, as well as images of adult women portrayed in ways that sexualise girls). The researcher also analyzed whether or not sexualisation of girls has become more prevalent over the years 1992-2008. The media forms chosen for analysis included music videos and teen girl magazine advertisements. These were chosen to represent forms of media popular with adolescent girls, but which are consumed differently (e.g., one is watched and listened to; the other is read). Second, focus groups were conducted with girls in grade 6, 9, and 12 to qualitatively assess how they make meaning of (understand), and are influenced by, sexualised media images and messages about girls. That is, what are their opinions of and experience with media sexualisation of girls? The content analysis and focus group findings together provided complementary information that is integral to understanding the level of risk media sexualisation poses for girls. The quantitative data show how intensely and in what ways girls are being targeted. The qualitative data shows how girls understand and respond to being

targeted in this way. That is, together the data help provide more evidence regarding the nature and scope of the problem of sexualisation of girls by the media.

The following sections will review the psychological literature examining (a) the prevalence of sexualisation of girls by the mass media and (b) the psychosocial consequences of sexualisation for girls. Following this review of the literature, the specific research questions and hypotheses are described in detail. Next, the method used to address the questions and hypotheses is explained.

Prevalence of Sexualisation of Girls in the Mass Media

Music videos. Research shows that music videos are widely consumed by girls (Media Literacy Foundation, 2003). For example, the American Academy of Paediatrics (1996) reported that surveys of American adolescents show they watch on average one-half to two hours of music videos every day. More recently, the Kaiser Family Research Foundation (2005) conducted a study of media use among 8-18 year-olds using a nationally representative sample of American students in grades 3–12. They found that 49% of both boys and girls watch music videos daily. Moreover, music videos make up 8% of the total TV time watched by this age group. Therefore, music videos are important to study because of their popularity with young viewers (Ashby & Rich, 2005; Ward, 2013). The music industry has been critiqued as being male-dominated and most frequently reflecting the desires of men, in particular representing adolescent male fantasies (Jhally, 1995; as cited in Ward, 2013).

In regard to music videos, Andsager and Roe (2003) reviewed the empirical research published in the 1980s and 1990s examining the sexual content of such videos watched by children and adolescents. Regardless of how sexual content was operationally defined, they reported “overwhelmingly consistent findings” regardless of music genre (e.g., rap, country) that

females are routinely sexualised in music videos. According to the authors, females in music videos were predominantly portrayed as sexual objects, whose only purpose was to be attractive and to "swarm over" the males. For example, in one random sample of country music videos, 42% of females were nearly nude and were wearing sexual clothing (Andsager & Roe, 1999). In contrast to the sexualised portrayal of females, consistently it has been reported that few men are sexually objectified in music videos. For example, Seidman (1992) found that, in a random sample of 182 music videos, only 9% of males' clothing (in comparison to 26% of females' clothing) was coded as "alluring" or "sexy."

Andsager and Roe (2003) presented a typology of how (mostly female) sexualisation was presented in music videos based upon their review. Three inter-related thematic messages were identified. The first theme, "Sex as a Metamorphosis," applied mostly to teenage artists. Sexuality was used to create the illusion that teen artists had evolved into more mature versions of their former selves. Many teen artists (e.g., Faith Hill and Christina Aguilera) received "highly sexualised image makeovers" as they reached late adolescence, presumably to be marketable to an adult audience. For example, at age 17, Britney Spears wore pigtails and school attire in the video for "Baby One More Time" (2000), whereas at age 20, in the video "I'm a Slave for You" (2003), she is barely clothed in a see-through halter-top. Andsager and Roe argue that this tactic purposely sells the artist on the basis of her sexual appeal, rather than her musical talent, and teaches girls that what is most important is being sexy and attractive.

The second theme identified by Andsager and Roe (2003), "Sex as Fantasy Fulfillment," conveys the message that showing off one's sexuality and body to fulfil male fantasies is how females demonstrate that they are self-confident. The third theme, "Sex as Power," presents the idea that female power comes from the power to "flaunt" sexuality. Both of these themes are

present in Christina Aguilera's video for "Drrrty" (2001), in which she is situated as ringleader, wearing underwear and chaps, thrusting and grinding, at the centre of attention of a posse of near-naked boys and girls. Andsager and Roe argue that these videos teach girls that their success and power will be based upon becoming sex objects and performing sexually for men, not from their talents or abilities.

The portrayal of females in "African-American music video genres" such as rap and hip hop have become a concern to some researchers (e.g., Ward, 2013). According to Ward, in U.S. music, such genres currently make up a "notable proportion" of music videos. Sexualised content may be especially high in rap and hip hop videos, which typically feature African-American artists and characters (Jones, 1997; Ward, 2013). For example, Jones (1997) analyzed the prevalence of violent and sexual imagery in 203 videos of diverse genres from four cable channels. Jones coded 11 items such as fondling, simulated intercourse, and hot pants and found that the levels were highest in hip hop or rap videos. For example, 58.3 % of hip hop videos were coded as featuring women dancing sexually, compared to 7.8% of rock videos. Likewise, 41.7% of hip hop videos featured women wearing hot pants, compared to 5.9% of rock videos. It might be that the sexualised female content of rap and hip hop videos reflects African-American culture (Emerson, 2002; Ward et al., 2013).

Ward et al. (2013) sampled 70 videos featured in a New Years Eve review on African-American Entertainment Television of the top videos in 2000. Each video was coded (y/n) for 18 sexual behaviours (such as kissing, self-touching, dressing sexually). These researchers coded levels of dress/undress of each outfit worn by a character, evaluated on a 1-4 scale with 1 representing neutral, non-sexy (e.g., jeans and t-shirt) dress; 2 signifying somewhat alluring (e.g., women in tight skirts or shorts); 3 signifying alluring (women in lingerie or bathing suits); and 4

representing implied nudity. Ward et al. found that, of the 70 videos analyzed, 84.3% contained one or more types of sexual imagery. Sexual objectification of women was present in 58.6% of the videos; women dancing sexually in 57.1 % of the videos; women fondling themselves in 45.7% of videos; and women found fondling others in 45.7 % of videos. In regard to sexually objectifying dress of females, they found that 44.2% contained mildly provocative dress, 23.8% contained provocative lingerie or swimsuits, and 2.7% contained or implied nudity.

Music lyrics. Listening to music is also a large part of adolescent life. For example, according to the Kaiser Media Foundation (2005), 8-18 year-olds on average listen to almost two hours of music (including radio, CDs, and MP3s) per day. For mid-adolescents in particular, time spent listening to music may be even greater. For example, one survey of American 14-16 year-olds found that, on average, the respondents listened to 40 hours of music per week (American Paediatric Association, 1996).

At least one study's findings indicate that music content is also highly sexualised. Martino et al. (2006) conducted a national, longitudinal telephone survey of 1461 adolescents to assess music most popular with 12-17 year-olds (by asking how frequently they listened to a list of current music artists representing a variety of genres). They then quantitatively analyzed the music lyrics of the top 12 artists for references to sex. Martino et al. found that 40% of lyrics contained sexual content and 15% were sexually degrading to females. For example, the degrading content included lyrics such as, "So blow me bitch, I don't rock for cancer/ I rock for the cash and the topless dancers" (Kid Rock, 1998).

Television. Television content is also highly consumed by North American girls. According to the Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood (2007) survey of American families, 90% of elementary school children watch television every day. Similarly, a national,

representative survey of American children (Neilson Company, 2009) found that children age 2-5 watch, on average, 32 hours of TV per week, whereas children age 6-11 watch 28 hours of TV per week (presumably lower because they are in school). On average, American youth watch 3-4 hours of TV each day, with higher rates among African-American and Hispanic-American youth (Roberts et al., 2005; as cited in Ward, 2013).

Ward (2003) reviewed the empirical evidence documenting the depiction of sexuality in TV content. In total, 41 published studies were reviewed that conducted statistical analyses of sexual content, including prime time comedies, dramas, and daytime soap operas. Typically, researchers recorded a block of programming and then analyzed the dialogue and actions of the characters for sexual acts or references, using a list of behaviours. They consistently found that females are depicted as sex objects and that females' bodies are sexualised more frequently than men's bodies, mirroring the results of content analyses of music videos. For example, in one analysis of soap operas it was found that, compared to men, women were nude or sex objects at a 4:1 ratio (Greenberg, Abelman, & Nuendorf, 1981).

Sexual harassment and violence against females are commonly presented as acceptable in TV. For example, Grauerholz and King (1997) conducted a content analysis of 48 hours of 28 prime time television shows randomly selected from one week of programming on three major networks. Eighty-four percent of the shows contained at least one incident of sexual harassment of girls or women (the average was 3.4), including sexist comments (derogatory remarks or jokes), physical advances (pinching, fondling), sexual bribery, harassing phone calls, and rape. Although sexual harassment was widespread, it was not portrayed as a problem in the offending episodes. A laugh track was heard during 70.6% of the cases, some quite serious. For example, in 25% of the cases involving sexual bribery, a laugh track was heard. Arguably, television

perpetuates several myths about sexual harassment, including that it is not serious, that girls and women should be able to handle it, and that it can be prevented if victims would simply resist. Overall, females are repeatedly sexualised and extreme forms of sexualisation on TV are common.

Magazines. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation (2005), 8-18 year-olds read magazines, on average, for 14 minutes per day. They also report that, on any given day, 60% of 15-18 year-olds will read a magazine. According to the Foundation, teen magazines are one of the most successful genres, with the number of titles increasing from five in 1990 to 19 in 2000. More recently, fashion magazine directed at pre-teens were launched, such as *Barbie* and *The Total Girl* (Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013).

Magazines read by adolescent girls have been found to contain sexualised content (APA, 2007). APA determined that at least four studies have examined the sexual content of teen girls' magazines (Carpenter, 1998; Duffy & Gotcher, 1996; Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998). Across studies, the most dominant theme was that being sexually desirable and gaining the attention of males was most important for girls. Girls are repeatedly told (via ads, articles, cover lines, etc) that if they change by losing weight, learning sexual techniques, applying make-up, and dressing sexy (via the products sold in the magazine), they can gain love and attention. This is labelled "costuming for seduction" by Duffy and Gotcher (1996). According to Duffy and Gotcher, it serves the magazines' purpose of selling ad space. Massive amounts of money are involved in media marketing to children and adolescents. For example, advertising directed at children is estimated at over $15 billion annually (Linn, 2004).

Another dominant theme found across teen magazine analyses is female sexuality leading to victimization by males. Although girls are repeatedly encouraged to attract male attention,

they are also taught that male attention is often aggressive or violent, so girls must remain vigilant of men (Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998). For example, in one study of 244 articles about sexuality and romance from issues of Seventeen published in 1974, 1984 and 1994, sex leading to victimization (e.g., rape) appeared in 62% of articles in both 1974 and in 1984, and 46% in 1994 (Carpenter, 1998). Although this appears to be a decreasing trend, it was not tested statistically.

The above magazine warning may reflect the reality of sexual violence experienced by girls. According to national, anonymous, representative, telephone surveys in the United States, one in four girls will be sexually assaulted before the age of 18 (Finkelhor et al., 1990). Moreover, adolescent girls between the ages of 16 and 19 are three times more likely to be victims of rape than females in the general population (Rennison, 2001). However, violence was often framed in teen magazines as a natural by-product of male sexuality, and can be stopped if girls resist. Thus, the message conveyed is that victims must not have resisted and may, therefore, be to blame. As discussed earlier, television also perpetuates several myths about sexual harassment, including that it can be prevented if victims simply resist (Grauerholz & King, 1997). Overall, content analyses of teen girl magazines present a conflicting and contradictory construction of girls' sexuality (APA, 2007). On one hand, the magazines frequently and explicitly encourage girls to be sexually alluring to attract males. On the other hand, girls are also warned that males can be sexually dangerous and to be cautious of them (Garner et al., 1998).

Graff, Murnen, and Krause (2013) conducted a content analysis of clothing in Seventeen magazine and Girls Life magazine to see if sexualised characteristics of clothing (e.g., non-functional shoes, short hemlines, leather/pleather, high heel shoes, low cut shirts) has been

increasing in these magazines over time. Girls Life is aimed at younger girls (i.e., pre-teens and girls age 10-15) and is less celebrity and fashion-focused in comparison to Seventeen magazine, which targets girls between 12 and 19. They analyzed two issues per year (April and October) from the years 1971, 1981, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2011 for 14 issues total from Seventeen. They also analyzed one issue from Girls Life in 1994 and three issues per year from 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2011 for 13 issues total. Each depiction of a female in any picture (all magazine content) was assessed for the presence of sexualising clothing. In total, 1649 images in Seventeen and 763 images in Girls Life were assessed. One-way analyses of variances were conducted to examine whether the mean number of sexualised characteristics in the depictions varied across time for each magazine. The independent variable was year, whereas the dependent variable was total number of sexualising characteristics in each depiction. The tests were highly statistically significant ($p < .001$) for both Seventeen and Girls Life. In other words, the mean number of sexualising characteristics of clothing increased across time for both magazines.

Graff et al. (2013) also examined if there were variations in the sexualising characteristics by age of female depicted in the images. The 178 pre-teen girls depicted across the two magazines had the lowest mean number of sexualising characteristics overall, which was less than that of the 1479 teens and the 750 adults. When the researchers examined if the depiction of sexualising clothing was increasing across the years for girls only (preteens and teens together; not adults) alone using one-way analysis of variance, they found that the effect was still highly significant (i.e., increasing sexualising characteristics across the years, $p < .001$) for both magazines. This finding was repeated when adult women were included in the analysis (i.e., when all females were included). Lastly, Graff et al. found that there were more sexualised clothing depictions of racial /ethnic minority females than Caucasian females ($p < .001$).

Advertising. In regard to advertising, it has been estimated that children see 360,000 ads by the time they turn 18 (Harris, 1989). The Media Awareness Network (2009) reported that the average child under 18 sees 3000 ads every day.

Merskin (2004) conducted a qualitative assessment of the sexualised portrayals of girls in fashion advertising, using Galician's (2004) model for media literacy analysis. Galician's model entails "7 Steps to Dis-Illusioning" girl images in media. The first step is detection. That is, finding/identifying and examining examples of the phenomenon of interest (in Merskin's case, sexualised portrayals of girls). Step 2 is description. That is, describe the images. Step 3 is deconstruction. That is, provide a media-literacy explanation of the media image (e.g., a critical analysis of the image and negative consequences for girls). Step 4 is diagnosis. That is, identify the "myth" the media maker is portraying about girls (e.g., that girls are sex objects). Step 5 is design. This step involves reframing the media message in a realistic and/or positive way (e.g., if examining an ad that is for a swim suit, instead of using a sexy model, discuss how the swimsuit could be shown for its function, (e.g., show someone using it for swimming). Step 6 is debriefing. This step entails reflecting on what has been learned (e.g., an oppositional reading of ads may reveal that what is for sale goes beyond the product, the body is being used in a specific way that is oppressive for women and girls). It may also include examination of those in control of the media institution and how they are benefiting from the use of these images (e.g., girls who dislike their bodies are more likely to buy product to enhance the way they look). The last step is dissemination. This step refers to following up the gained knowledge by action. For example, participants are connected to media literacy groups that are challenging the stereotypical portrayal of girls and women (e.g., About-Face.org); provided resources for further examination; offered suggestions for taking action (e.g., forming positive images, boycotting products).

Merskin (2004) applied this method to four fashion ads found in magazines and newspapers in 2002 that contained sexualised representations of girls. These ads were not chosen to represent a meaningful sample. Instead they were chosen for the purpose of deconstructing the message about sexualised girls to illuminate what Merskin believes are harmful messages present in mainstream advertising about girls and sex. First, Merskin provided detailed descriptions of the advertising images. For example, one advertisement displays a African-American adolescent girl seated on a chair, with her legs spread eagle across the seat. She is leaning on her right elbow, head turned sidewise. She has pink glossy lips, is sucking her thumb, and wears a jacket that is unzipped to below her cleavage. In another advertisement, a blond adolescent girl is shown wearing a blue lace bra and g-string bikini panties. Merskin noted that her body is positioned in a way that communicates she is willing and available for sexual activity.

Merskin (2004) then analyzed the "myth" about girls contained in the ads (step 4). Overall, it was concluded that, "the message from advertisers and the mass media to girls (as eventual women) is that they should always be sexually available, always have sex on their minds, be willing to be dominated and even sexually aggressed against, and they will be gazed on as sexual objects" (p. 120). Merskin concludes that using images of girls (or grown woman made to look like girls) in ads promotes voyeuristic fantasies about girls as being culturally appropriate.

Lastly, Merskin (2004) addresses what would be a realistic reframing of the ads. She suggests that the ads targeting girls should portray them in non-sexualised ways that have relevance to their lives. She concludes that a symbolic reading of the ads shows that what is really for sale goes beyond the product (if it was even shown). According to Merskin, her conclusion from decoding these advertisements is that what is also being sold is a point of view

that supports an ideology that sexualizes girls, and infantilises girls and women, to control them and to legitimize that control.

More recently, Goodin et al. (2011) conducted a content analysis of sexualising characteristics in girls' clothing (i.e., clothing sizes 6-14, generally aimed at "girl-children") found in online advertisements on websites of 15 national stores were sexualised. They coded girls clothing on popular store websites over a period of 10 days in June, 2010. Color pictures were printed for every clothing item on each store's website. An item of clothing was considered to be sexualising if it (a) revealed or emphasized a sexualised body part emphasized or revealed sexualised body parts such as chest, waist, or buttocks (like bikinis and push up bras), (b) had characteristics associated with sexiness (red satin lingerie – like dresses), or (c) had writing on it that that was sexualised (e.g., a shirt that says juicy across the top). They examined the frequency and nature of sexualising clothing available for girls. In addition to coding for sexualising characteristics in clothing, clothing was also coded for child-like characteristics such as polka dots patterns. Overall, they found that 30% of clothing items size 6-14 advertised for girls were sexualised. Across all stores and all articles of clothing, 69% of the clothing items contained only childlike characteristics, 4% had only sexualised characteristics (and no child-like characteristics), and 25.4% contained a mix of both sexualising and child-like characteristics (1% of clothing items had neither characteristic). Of the items that contained sexualisation, 75.8% revealed sexualised body parts, 7.5% had characteristics associated with sexiness, and 0.4% had sexy writing (these were not mutually exclusive categories).

Goodin et al. (2011) used chi-square analysis to determine if there were differences in the prevalence of type of clothing by type of store, classified as bargain department stores, children stores, general department stores, higher-end department stores, speciality stores, and Tween

stores. The overall chi-square was significant ($p<.001$), due primarily to the fact that Tween stores had more sexualised clothing and less child-like clothing than any other stores. Across all the store types, Tween stores had the highest proportion of sexualised clothing at 10.4%.

Advertising trends of sexualisation of girls. One study that has examined trends in the depiction of sexualised children over time is a quantitative analysis of ads conducted by O'Donahue, Gold, and McKay (1997). They examined how often children were depicted sexually in ads from five magazines (Cosmopolitan, Ladies Home Journal, Playboy, Sports Illustrated, Newsweek) across a uniform sampling of the last two years of four decades (1950s-1980s). A "child" was defined as a person who was viewed by two raters as being 16 years old or younger. Sexual content was coded if (a) an emphasis was placed on posing the child as adult-like or mature, (b) a sexually provocative adult was paired with a similarly posed child, or (c) child nudity aimed at being enticing, arousing, or sexually suggestive was present.

Overall, there were a total of 2336 ads containing children. In 38 of those advertisements, children were depicted in a sexualised manner (1.5%). Girls were depicted in 34 of the sexualised ads, whereas boys were depicted in only six ads, which was a statistically significant difference ($p<.001$) according to chi-square analysis. This means that girls were sexualised significantly moreso than boys. Chi-square analysis also established that the frequency of sexualised depictions increased over the four decades ($p<.001$). Thus, this study provides quantitative evidence that young girls were increasingly being sexualised in ads during the 1960s through 1980s (O'Donahue et al., 1997), which supports the more recent qualitative evidence that ads sexualize girls (Merskin, 2004). On the other hand, it could be said that finding 1.5% of the total ads involving children were sexualised is trivial. However, even this is somewhat unsurprising, given that the ads were published in the 1950s and 1960s, when social standards

for sex and femininity were arguably far more conservative. Clearly, research examining trends in sexualisation in recent years is needed. Graff et al.'s (2013) study of all magazine content (including advertising) aimed at girls covered recent years and is a valuable contribution that helps clarify current prevalence.

Video games. Kaiser Family Foundation (2005) reported that boys aged 8-18 play significantly more video games than girls aged 8-18, although girls do play video games. Boys play 30 minutes of videogames per day on average, in comparison to girls who play on average eight minutes per day ($p<.001$).

Evidence exists that females are commonly sexualised in video games. Dietz (1998) examined a sample of 17 games created by using lists of the most popular 1995 Nintendo and Sega Genesis titles. These lists were provided by a local movie store and appeared in the January, 1996 issue of Electronic Gaming Monthly. The following categories were coded: (a) no females, (b) females portrayed as sex objects (e.g., wearing revealing clothing, body shape emphasis), and (c) females as the victim (e.g., kidnapped or assaulted as part of the plot). There were no females in 41% of the games. When females were present, 28% were portrayed as a sex object. For example, in Madden 95 (1994) the cheerleaders and female audience of the football game are scantily clad. Dietz found that nearly 80% of games contained violence, 21% of which was directed at women. For example, in Paper Boy 2 (1992), the paper carrier scored points by hitting a woman in a bikini with the paper. Thus, females were often not portrayed at all, but when they were, they were generally portrayed as victims of male violence or as sex objects.

Haniger and Thompson (2004) found similar results concerning video games. In their study, the sexual content of 80 video games rated T for Teens was quantified. The games were randomly sampled from a population of 396 games released in the U.S. in 2001. Each game was

played for at least one hour. Sexual themes (e.g., overt references to sex) were found in 27% of games. When the definition of sexual theme was increased to include sexy images, such as pronounced cleavage, large breasts, or provocative clothing, 46% of female characters were sexualised. Females were significantly more likely to be depicted as sexualised than males based on a two-sided binomial test ($p<.001$). For example, nine games contained male nudity, whereas females were nude in 18 games.

In conclusion, consistently across quantitative and qualitative media analyses pertaining to sexualisation, researchers have found that (a) females are highly sexualised but males are not; (b) the most common form of sexualisation is sexual objectification; (c) extreme forms of sexualisation (e.g., sexual harassment) are commonly present; and (d) females are either blamed for sexual harassment/violence or it is depicted as harmless.

Despite the strong evidence cited above, some gaps in the literature remain. First, little research has examined the sexualised depiction of girls (females under age 18) specifically. The exceptions are two studies of magazine ads (Merskin, 2004; O'Donahue et al., 1997) and Ward's (2003) analysis of the construction of teenage singers' sexuality in music videos. Thus, it remains unclear to what extent girls, in particular, are being sexualised.

It also remains unclear the degree to which sexualisation of girls in the media is increasing. Lamb and Brown (2006), as well as Levin and Kilbourne (2008), have stated that they perceive media sexualisation of girls to have increased since the 1990s. Yet, only two studies have empirically examined if sexualisation of girls has been increasing in media (magazine content and ads) (Graff et al.; O'Donahue et al., 1997). These perceptions should continue to be tested in a range of media and, particularly, in more recent samples (APA, 2007). As pointed out by Roberts and Zurbriggen (2013), the questions of (a) whether younger and

younger girls are being depicted in sexualised ways in the media and (b) whether the sexualisation of girls has been increasing over time in media remain largely unexplored. Roberts and Zurbriggen report that the ease with which examples from media are easy to find seems to indicate increasing sexualisation. For example, in their review they show the evolution of an advertisement campaign for Christian Dior fragrance “Addict” from 2002 to 2005. Both ads are examples of sexual objectification (i.e., the focus is on the body parts as opposed to the whole person). However, according to Roberts and Zurbriggen, the second ad is clearly intended to depict a much younger person (a girl), as the face is very young and the body is prepubescent. The model’s age is exaggerated by the use of the color pink, her little girl underwear, her pout, and the way she is playing with her hair. More research is clearly needed to document the frequency of such sexualisation of girls and to examine whether this treatment is increasing, as so many cultural commentators suspect.

Most content analyses have not specifically examined if there is variation in sexualised images and messages by social-demographic characteristics, such as ethnicity and socio-economic status. From a sociological perspective, sex and sexuality are tied to race and class inequalities/stereotypes in society (APA, 2007; Anderson & Taylor, 2008). For example, historically, African-American women have been seen as sexual animals who were openly available to Caucasian men (Anderson & Taylor, 2008; Kilbourne, 2000). Therefore, sexualised media representations of African-American girls may conform to these stereotypes. Ward (2013) is one example of a research study that focused only on African-American women andAfrican-American music videos. A more complete, culturally sensitive picture of media sexualisation would merge if future research took cultural variables into account (APA, 2007).

In conclusion, despite several research gaps, consistent evidence exists that girls are being exposed to highly sexualised media content. Next, this review will summarize the psychological literature concerning consequences of media sexualisation for girls. First, development theory indicating that adolescent girls may be particularly vulnerable to media sexualisation will be presented. Second, psychological theories of the specific mechanisms for how media sexualisation of girls influences girls and is harmful to them will be summarized. Lastly, empirical research linking media sexualisation to harmful consequences for girls will be described. This review will not cover to any great extent studies examining sexualisation of women, or the occurrence of sexualisation of girls in other ecological spheres (e.g., sexualised treatment of girls by family), which are covered elsewhere (for example, see APA, 2007; Choate & Curry, 2009).

Psychological Consequences of Media Sexualisation for Girls

The American Psychological Association (2007) and others (e.g., Choate & Curry, 2009; Levin & Kilbourne, 2008) reviewed the evidence documenting the consequences of sexualisation of girls and women in interpersonal spheres (e.g., by family members, friends, in the community) as well as cultural spheres (media). APA (2007) reported that, "Ample evidence indicates that sexualisation has negative effects in a variety of domains, including cognitive functioning, physical and mental health, sexuality, and attitudes and beliefs." Most of the research linking sexualisation to negative consequences has focused on women, not girls, but girls may well be influenced similarly to women (Choate & Curry, 2009; Levin & Kilbourne, 2008). Further, adolescent girls may be particularly vulnerable to sexualised media, due to developmental issues, described below.

Sexualisation and adolescent development. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of development is useful for understanding the potential influence of sexualised media on adolescent girls' development. This model stresses the person-context interactional nature of development. As can be seen in Figure 1, the model consists of four concentric circles representing four ecological levels. The macro-system is the outer-most level of the social ecology. The macro-system influences girls' development through dominant cultural/societal ideologies, including norms, values, and beliefs (e.g., sexualisation and sexism). Media is one way through which macro-system factors exert their influence. Media sexualisation may influence girls directly (e.g., girls may behave in sexualised ways after viewing media), but it may also influence girls indirectly by interacting with other systems in the ecology. For example, sexualised images of girls may cultivate beliefs in men that it is appropriate to sexualize girls, which leads to sexual harassment of girls, which in turn lead to negative health effects. Thus, although girls are highly influenced by other socializing agents in their social ecologies, such as family and peers, these agents are also influenced by media-saturated culture. These agents, for better or worse, reinforce and mediate the messages received by girls from the media and culture (McKinley, 1999).

Although sexualisation occurs in spheres other than the media, media is considered a major socializing agent of girls in Western culture because of how highly media-saturated girlhood has become (Levin & Kilbourne, 2008). Research indicates that girls spend much of their time engaged in some form of media (Ward & Friedman, 2006). For example, Neilson Media Research (1998) reported that, according to a national representative survey, when various media are combined, children view six and one-half hours per day of media, typically more time spent than in school or interacting with parents directly (Sandberg & Hofferth, 2001). This

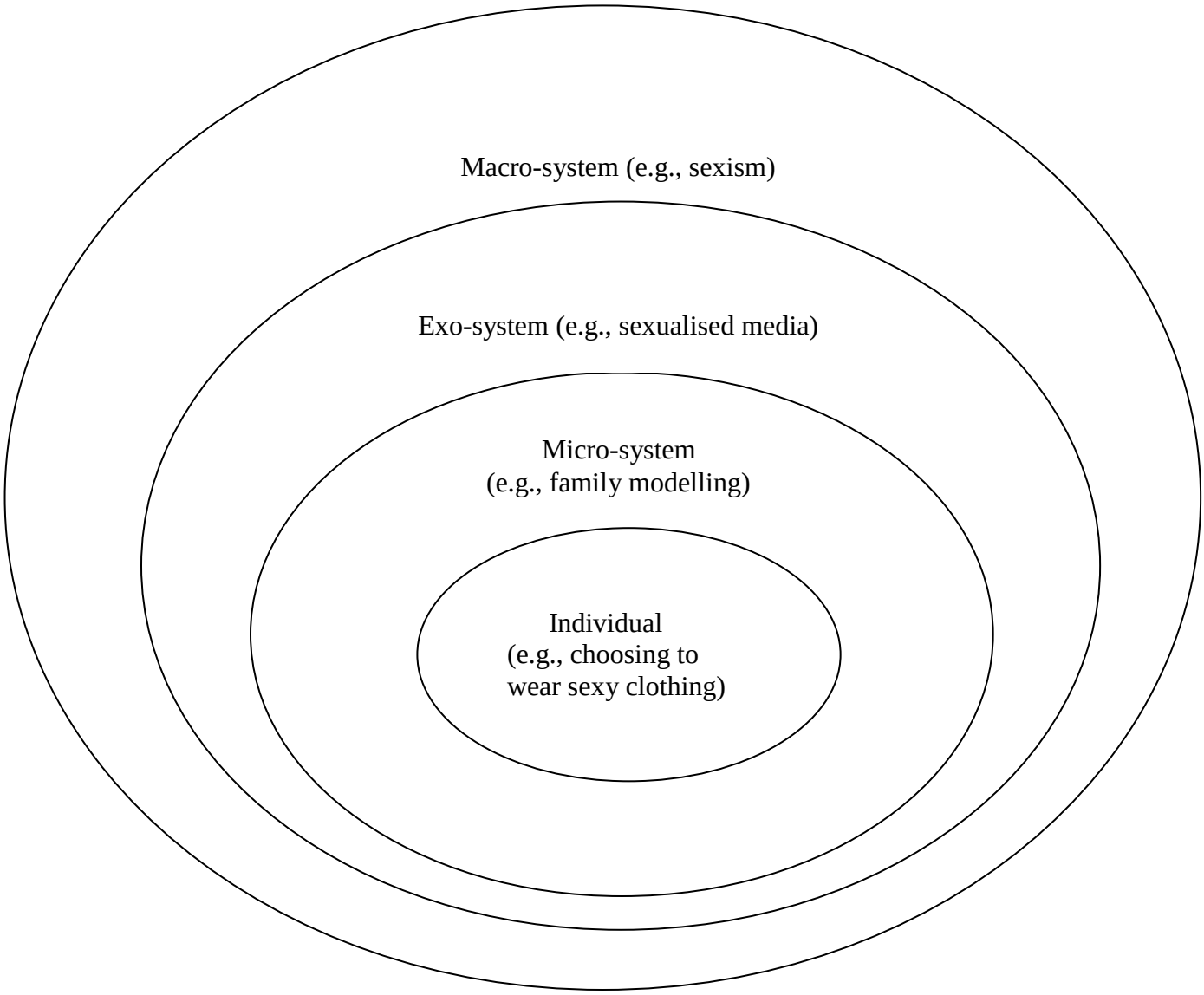

Figure 1. An Ecological Framework of Sexualisation of Girls.[1]

Individual Level: Represents the personal history, as well as psychological and/or biological factors unique to the person.

Microsystem Level*:* Represents immediate situational contexts where the sexualisation may take place, such as the family.

Exosystem Level: Represents formal and informal institutions and social structures that embed the microsystem, such as work, community, and media.

Macrosystem Level*:* Representing cultural norms, values, and beliefs (ideology) regarding sexualisation of girls and women that permeate the society at large.

[1]Based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Model

media diet has increased in the last decade. On average, American children between the ages of eight and 18 spend more than seven and one-half hours a day using media (including watching TV, listening to music, playing video games, and using social networking sites) (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010; National Center for Education Statistics, 2007–2008). Even younger children age five to eight spend 168 hours more with media than they do in school each year, which is on average, six hours and 42 minutes a day, 180 days a year) (Common Sense Media, 2011; National Center for Education Statistics, 2007-2008; Education Commission of the States). As a result, girls may learn a great deal about gender and sex from the sexualised depictions they encounter in the media every day (Levin & Kilbourne, 2008).

Sexualisation is argued to exacerbate with normal developmental challenges for adolescent girls (APA, 2007). Adolescence has been characterized as a time of developmental risks and as a crossroads for girls (Pipher, 1994). As girls enter adolescence, they are more likely to develop a number of mental health problems than boys, including depression, eating disorders, low self-esteem, and other forms of psychological distress (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2002). For example, compared to males, adolescent females experience depression at a rate of 2:1 and eating disorders at a rate of 10:1. These gender differences begin to appear as girls and boys transition to adolescence (APA, 1994). Similarly, meta-analyses have found that gender differences in self-esteem (Kling, Hyde, Showers, & Buswell, 1999) and depression (Twenge & Nolen–Hoeksema, 2002) emerge during the transition to adolescence, with a higher proportion of adolescent girls being affected than boys. Next, the discussion will turn to those normal adolescent developmental tasks made more difficult for girls by excessive/premature sexualisation.

Identity development. Identity formation is the major psychosocial developmental challenge of adolescence (Erikson, 1968). According to Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development, identity formation (or creating a sense of self) is a "process located in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of culture." During early adolescence, girls begin to differentiate from their families of origin and look to popular culture, the media, and peer groups to gain an understanding of who they are, who they want to be, and where they want to fit in (Bowen, 1978). Strasburger and Wilson (2002) describe pre-adolescents and adolescents as being like "actors" experimenting with identities or roles from those offered within the culture. This makes girls vulnerable to sexualised marketing and media messages (Pipher, 1994). Through repeated exposure to media sexualisation, girls may learn that their sexual appeal is key to achieving social success, relationships, and happiness (LeCroy, 2004). If the media teaches girls that their most valued quality is being sexy and attractive, girls are influenced to internalize this belief as part of their identity.

Social distinctions, such as ethnicity and socio-economic status (SES), play a role in how girls integrate beliefs about self to create identity (Pyke, 1996). Therefore, girls' ethnicity and socio-economic status (SES) may influence the way that sexualised media messages are perceived and understood. For example, Impett, Schooler, and Tolman (2006) argue that media/cultural sexualisation may be a risk factor for teen pregnancy, particularly among less affluent girls. Adolescent pregnancy is a social problem disproportionately experienced by poor teenage girls (Dupere et al., 2008). Poor girls may see few opportunities to obtain what is deemed necessary for economic success in our society (e.g., culturally attractive appearance, education, family role-modelling and support, early job experience, etc). As a result, poor girls may see few opportunities for identity development beyond motherhood. Therefore, when poor

girls internalize sexualised beliefs, they may accept early pregnancy or motherhood as a primary means for achieving a socially-valued identity (Impett, Schooler, & Tolman, 2006).

More positively, some minority women may have cultural protective factors against media sexualisation. For example, African-American women are often respected for being strong, outspoken, and achievement-oriented, as well as nurturing and caring (Phinney & Alipura, 1990). Therefore, developing a strong ethnic identity may protect African-American girls from media gender-role pressures. In fact, studies have shown that, although African-American girls' self-esteem drops in adolescence, it does not do so to the same extent it does for Caucasian girls. According to the report *How Schools Shortchange Girls* (American Association of University Women, 1992), in elementary school 55% of Caucasian girls, 65% of African-American girls, and 68% of Hispanic-American girls in the U.S. agreed with the statement "I feel happy." In high school, agreement with this statement dropped to 22% of Caucasian girls, 58% of African-American girls, and 30% of Hispanic-American girls. Obviously, Hispanic-American girls' self-esteem dropped even more than Caucasian girls and far more than African-American girls. This suggests that cultural protective factors may apply only to some ethnic minorities.

Physical development. Media sexualisation may also interact with the physical changes girls are experiencing. During adolescence, girls are challenged to become comfortable with their changing body (e.g., menarche, breast and hip development, weight gain) and sexuality (Bunker Rosdahl & Kowalski, 2007). During puberty, girls gain on average 40 pounds during the same time they are encouraged to strive for a sexy cultural ideal, namely thin and full-breasted. This is impossible for most girls to achieve. The body changes that occur with puberty, and how others respond to them, can make girls feel awkward and uncomfortable (Pipher, 1994). Brown and Gilligan (1993) argue that, at puberty, adolescent girls begin to more frequently experience

sexualised evaluation and objectification. As they do so, they learn that their body belongs more to others than it does to them. Instead of providing an environment that teaches girls (and boys) to value and respect female bodies, our media-saturated culture exploits and demeans female bodies (i.e., views them as only sexual objects, devalues what female bodies can do in other domains such as physical activity). For girls, sexual development within this context may lead to insecurity and shame (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Adolescent dating and sexual experiences. Media sexualisation may also interfere with adolescent girls' sexual development. In conjunction with puberty and becoming physically ready to engage in sexual intercourse and procreate, adolescents generally become increasingly interested in the opposite sex. Dating and breaking up often involve extremely complicated feelings for adolescents (Bunker Rosdahl & Kowalski, 2007). Emotional conflicts can also be involved in refusing and accepting sexual activity. Girls who have learned that their sexuality is the way to maintain relationships with boys may deny their own feelings and accept sexual experiences they don't want in order to maintain relationships.

Unfortunately, after puberty girls become increasingly at-risk of being targets of sexual harassment and abuse (i.e., subject to incidents of unwanted sexual activity, including sexual attacks and sexual touching) (Purcell & Zurbriggen, 2013). According to anonymous, representative, telephone surveys in the United States, one in four girls will be sexually assaulted before the age of 18 (Finkelhor et al., 1990). Moreover, teenage girls age 16-19 are three times more likely to be victims of rape than women in the general population (Rennison, 2000). When a girl is sexually victimized, from sexual harassment to rape, she is literally being treated as a thing or object by the perpetrator (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Healthy sexual development

may become derailed in a media environment that constantly sexualizes girls, which is antithetical to healthy sexuality (Levin & Kilbourne, 2008).

Peer relationships. Lastly, the dynamics of adolescent peer relationships may make adolescent girls vulnerable to media sexualisation. Fitting in with and being liked by peers is important to most girls (Bunker Rosdahl & Kowalski, 2007), which may leave them vulnerable to media sexualisation if they believe they can use clothes and other products to accomplish these goals (Brown, 1991). If the media pair sexiness with being popular, girls can be expected to imitate what they see (Linn, 2004).

In conclusion, mental health problems like depression and body image concerns peak for girls during adolescence (Coleman & Hendry, 1999). Sexualisation of girls by our culture makes the normal developmental challenges of adolescence more difficult to navigate for them (Mooney, Farley, & Strugnell, 2004). These developmental challenges, if not mastered successfully, may in turn lead to a host of harmful psychological consequences for girls. Next, the psychological mechanisms underlying for how media sexualisation specifically influences girls will be reported.

Psychological Mechanisms of Influence: Theory

A number of psychological theories have been proposed to explain the mechanisms by which media sexualisation influences girls' health and development (APA, 2007; Hatch, 2011; Roberts, 2013). For example, socialization theories such as social learning theory (Bandura, 1994) describes how girls observe behaviour that is modelled by socializing agents, including those found in the mass media, as well as the positive and/or negative consequences such agents receive for modelled behaviour (i.e., are they socially accepted for using that behaviour? Are they rejected?). According to this theory, girls are most likely to imitate models that they

perceive are similar to them, such as by age and ethnicity. This is one reason why it is important to know if girls specifically are being sexualised in the media. In addition, social learning theory suggests why having a more culturally-specific understanding of media sexualisation would be beneficial. For example, if African-American and Hispanic-American girls are more likely to be portrayed according to sexualised stereotypes, such girls may also be most at-risk of imitating these images and messages.

Also according to social learning theory, girls are more likely to imitate sources that they deem to be legitimate (i.e., trustworthy, worthy of attention). It is possible that images of sexualised girls in media targeting girls specifically (e.g., music videos, teenager-aimed magazines) may be more likely to be imitated than sources targeting other populations. This is because these sources are marketed directly to girls and tells girls explicitly that their content is important and relevant to their lives (e.g., how to get a boyfriend, how to make friends) (Linn, 2004). In comparison, girls may not think that sexualised media consumed by their parents is as relevant to them as media marketed directly at girls (APA, 2007).

Lastly, according to social learning theory, girls are more likely to imitate behaviour of models that is rewarded (Bandura, 1994). The mass media pair sexualised images of girls with valued social rewards, such as popularity and relationships (e.g., Carpenter, 1998). This encourages girls to be preoccupied with physical appearance and sex because it teaches that living up to cultural standards translates into power for girls. Again, if the media pair sexiness with being popular, girls can be expected to imitate it (Linn, 2004).

A socio-cultural theory that helps explain the influence of sexualised media on girls is social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954). This theory holds that people are subconsciously driven to look outside themselves to others to evaluate their own opinions and abilities. People

are motivated to do so because they believe the images portrayed by others are desirable, obtainable, and realistic. Social comparisons are usually upward. In other words, people tend to compare themselves to others who they deem more attractive and successful than themselves. For girls, this may well involve comparing themselves to media models portraying a nearly impossible, sexualised attractiveness, but which may appear reasonable and achievable for girls.

Another socio-cultural theory of media influence is cultivation theory (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorelli, & Shanahan, 1994), which proposes that the mass media presents a vivid but unrealistic picture of the world. Cultivation theorists emphasize the impact of media on people's attitudes and beliefs about the world. As individuals consume more and more media, they come to cultivate (i.e., adopt) the beliefs about the actual world that coincide with the "media" world. That is, the more media consumption, the more consumers believe that the content promoted by the media is realistic. In the present context, cultivation theory predicts that the more messages in media that portray females are sex objects, the more likely are girls to adopt this as true.

Cognitive developmental theory (e.g., Piaget, 1957) and identity-formation theories (e.g., Erikson, 1950) are also useful psychological theories, especially for understanding the role of sexualisation in girls' lives. The cognitive developmental framework for understanding gender development places less importance on external rewards and punishments, and more on girls own strivings to understand the world and their role in it (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). It explains that, once young girls have the cognitive capacity to understand their gender and its permanency, they come to value behaviours, objects, and attitudes that they perceive as consistent with the label girl or feminine (Warnin, 2000). For example, young girls will want to wear clothes, play with toys, and enact behaviours that are characterized as for girls. Girls socialize themselves into

what they see as feminine. Moreover, if feminine means sexualised, girls will comply because it helps them solidify their membership in their gender category.

As mentioned earlier, once girls reach adolescence, the developmental stage Erikson (1950) argued was characterized by individuals striving to form an identity, many experience crises. Strasburger and Wilson (2002) suggested that pre-adolescents and adolescents are like actors as they experiment with different features of their newly forming identities and try on different social masks. This plasticity may make girls especially susceptible to cultural messages about appropriate femininity. Predictably, girls lose self-esteem at this point, because they begin to construct their identity according to cultural messages about needing to be thin, large breasted, heterosexual, and Caucasian. Obviously, the majority of the girls and women cannot obtain this media ideal, with significant negative consequences for self-identity.

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) offered objectification theory as a comprehensive framework for understanding how the cultural milieu of sexual objectification of females influences girls' development and health. This is a socio-cultural theory that starts with the premise that girls in Western society observe this cultural milieu and, through repeated exposure to cultural messages, as well as personal experiences, they are led to internalize it. Consequently, girls begin to objectify themselves (APA, 2007). As this occurs, girls begin to focus on their bodies from a third-person (e.g., "How do I look and seem to others?") rather than a first-person perspective (e.g., "How do I feel? What do I think?") (Choate & Curry, 2009). In other words, girls accept the sexualised treatment by others and treat themselves as objects to be looked at and evaluated.

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) have theorized that internalizing sexualisation (treating and valuing oneself as a sexual object) is antithetical to meeting developmental challenges for

girls (positive identity formation, healthy sexuality). It may, therefore, negatively influence health, leading to eating disorders, depression, and low self-esteem. According to Fredrickson and Roberts, there are multiple ways that being a girl in a culture that objectifies and sexualizes the female body may lead to poor mental health outcomes. However, they suggest there are two main routes. First, the experience of objectification (being judged by others and treated differentially based on appearance) fosters habitual body monitoring, which leaves girls with shame, appearance anxiety, and body dissatisfaction if they perceive their bodies as not measuring up to that which is needed for happiness, success, and relationships. Body shame occurs when girls internalize cultural standards and do not feel able to meet these standards, or they perceive that their appearance is judged negatively by others (McKinley, 1999). Accumulation of these experiences for some girls could contribute to psychological disorders, such as depression.

The second route to poor mental health outcomes is more direct and extreme (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Actually experiencing sexual victimization and trauma (e.g., rape, sexual harassment) can lead to psychological disorders in girls and women (e.g., anxiety disorders, eating disorders, sexual dysfunction). Traumatic experiences are defined as situations in which people suddenly believe they are in grave danger, often leading them to become overwhelmed with intense feelings of fear, helplessness, or horror (e.g., Barlow, 2002). Survivors of trauma often re-experience symptoms such as believing one is in danger, or intrusive memories and thoughts about the trauma. Typically, survivors actively avoid any situation they fear might trigger re-experiencing the original trauma. These (primary) symptoms also include shutting down emotionally, feeling numb, and feeling disconnected. Re-experiencing trauma and having primary symptoms can lead to secondary symptoms. These

include, for example, using substances to avoid/numb painful memories of the experience, as well as negative emotions such as anger, fear, shame, etc. If these symptoms are not treated effectively, they can lead to a range of mental distress and disorders. For example, depression may result from long-term social exclusion, loneliness, and lack of support if an individual actively avoids social relationships in order to avoid trauma-related memories (Barlow, 2002).

With this theoretical grounding in mind, the empirical evidence linking media sexualisation to harmful consequences for girls will now be reviewed, starting with empirical evidence of media sexualisation and its influence on girls' health and well being from cross-cultural surveys and qualitative interviews, as well as from experimental studies. Literature will then be summarized showing that girls may self-sexualize and that internalizing sexualised ideals found in the media is related to harmful psychological consequences.

Consequences of Media Sexualisation of Girls: Empirical Evidence

Cross-cultural research and media sexualisation. The first line of evidence linking media sexualisation to psychological problems for girls is cross-cultural research. Becker et al. (2002) conducted a population-based, cross-sectional wave study in Fiji that demonstrated a "dramatic increase" in eating disorders among girls during the three years following the introduction of Western television media in 1995. The mean age of participants in the first wave (1995) was 17.3 years (n = 63) and, in the second wave (1998), it was 16.9 years (n = 65). The EAT-26 Inventory (Garner & Garfinkel, 1979) was used as an indicator of disordered eating. Scores above 20 are considered high on this measure. In 1995, 12.7% of Fijian girls had EAT-26 scores above 20, in comparison to 29.2% in 1998, which chi-square analysis indicated was significant (p<.05). Scores above 20 on the EAT were significantly associated with dieting (p<

.05) and self-induced vomiting (p<.001). In 1995, none of the sample had engaged in self-induced vomiting whereas, in 1998, 11.3% of the population had so engaged (X^2 = 6.95, p<.05).

The authors considered household television ownership to be an indicator of community access to television in addition to a marker of girls' level of exposure. In 1995, 41.3% of girls' households owned a TV, which increased to 70.8% in 1998. Becker et al. (2002) examined the association between television ownership and disordered eating. Respondents living in households with a television set were more than 3 times as likely to have an EAT-26 score greater than 20 (p<.05).

Becker (2004) conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with Fijian girls in 1998 to more clearly elucidate the factors mediating the adverse effects of Western media. Participants were 30 adolescent girls from a population of 65 girls (M age = 16.9) attending two Fijian schools. These girls were purposively selected from the population-based study just described, for maximal variety (e.g., SES). Respondents admitted to modelling themselves after the females on TV. For example, one girl said, "I see the ads in the television and I admire their fitness, their sizes. We can change, change our body." Girls also reported that they aspired to look sexy, as illustrated in this transcript: I: "Do you ever wish that you could look more like them (TV characters)?" S: "Yes very much, (laughs) because they look so sexy." I: "What makes them sexy?" S: "The way they act in the television."

The Fijian girls also explicitly stated that imitating television characters was related to changes in eating behaviours. For example, one girl said, "Some of my friends, when they watch TV, when they see one actor, they want to look like that actor. They lose weight and, um, some of them gain more weight." Overall, 83% of respondents said that TV had specifically influenced

them to feel different about or change their bodies. Moreover, 77% said that TV had negatively influenced their body image.

Participants indicated that their modelling of television characters was strategically motivated by a desire for competitive social positioning among their peers. For example, one participant said, “Those kinds of (fat and short) people too…they don’t have jobs because of their weight.” Overall, 40% of the participants rationalized desiring to change their bodies as a way of improving career prospects. It is notable that competitive social positioning caused Fijian girls to pursue the TV ideal. In Western society, sexualised media is also perceived to influence girls because adherence to its cultural messages is portrayed as linked to important opportunities, such as dating (APA, 2007). If girls perceive that sexiness will help them socially (e.g., be liked by boys), understandably they may imitate what they see.

Together, these cross-cultural studies provide strong evidence that girls imitate sexualised TV females because they perceive it will gain them social rewards (reinforcement), supporting social learning theory (Bandura, 1994). Nonetheless, this imitation is unrealistic and, therefore, harmful. The population-based quantitative findings suggest that eating disorders in Fiji more than doubled in the three years after the introduction of Western media. This finding strongly supports the proposition that the media powerfully influence girls in this direction, coupled with girls explicitly stating that they imitate TV females, as well as engage in dieting and other behaviours to become sexy and attractive.

Laboratory experiments and media sexualisation. The next line of evidence that sexualisation of girls is harmful to girls’ health comes from laboratory experiments. Groesz, Levine, and Murnen (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of the effect of experimental manipulations of culturally attractive females portrayed in the mass media on female body

image. Meta-analysis is a statistical procedure that allows researchers to combine the results of multiple studies of a variable of interest, in order to determine the overall size of the effect (*d)* of that variable (Brannon, 1998). Data from 25 studies (43 effect sizes; *N* = 2,292) were collected to examine the main effect of these media images. Five of the 25 studies were conducted with girls 18 years of age and under.

In each of the studies reviewed in the meta-analysis, participants were randomly assigned to either an experimental condition or a control condition. Participants in the experimental condition were exposed to media images that consisted of a small number (e.g., 3-12) of slim, culturally attractive female images (e.g., advertisements on slides, magazine images in a binder). The participants in the control condition were shown either no media or media containing images other than young, culturally attractive females (e.g., older people, inanimate objects). The participants generally looked at the images in a classroom/educational setting, for a brief period of time (e.g., 5-10 minutes). Afterwards, the participants answered a variety of self-report measures. The measures included body satisfaction, weight satisfaction, and physical attractiveness satisfaction. Afterwards, statistics were used to compare the mean score of the self-report measures for participants in the experimental group compared to the mean self-report scores of the participants in the control group.

Based on the 25 studies (*N* = 2,292), Groesz et al. (2002) calculated 43 *d* values to examine the main effect of the mass media images on body dissatisfaction (nine of the *d* values applied to studies with girls 18 years and under). There were more *d* values than there were studies because some studies had more than one effect size. Generally, *d* values were negative, meaning that the participants in the experimental conditions had more negative body image following exposure than participants in the control condition. The overall *d* for the meta-analysis

was -.31 (p<.001), which is a small but very significant effect size. This finding means that exposure to media images generally increases body dissatisfaction in viewers. Chi-square analyses comparing *d* values for participants younger vs. older than age 19 also were found to be significant (p<.05), indicating the effect size was greater for participants younger than age 19. This indicates that girls were more adversely affected by the media stimuli than women, as theoretically predicted (APA, 2007). The questionnaire measure (i.e., dependent measure) and type of control stimulus were not significantly related to effect size.

Experimental evidence also suggests that exposure to sexualised female images are directly related to positive attitudes toward violence against women (Johnson et al., 1995). Johnson et al. examined the effects of exposure to non-violent rap music on perceptions of teen dating violence among African-American adolescents (age 11-16; 30 males and 20 females) from an inner city youth club. Subjects were randomly assigned to view non-violent rap videos portraying women as sex objects (experimental condition) or no videos (control condition). The videos used in the experimental condition focused on dancing and partying. They featured rappers who were surrounded by scantily clad women appearing extremely enamoured with them.

After exposure, all participants read a vignette about teen dating violence. The vignette depicted a situation about a dating couple, Jerry and Susan. A long-time male friend of Susan's gives her a big hug and kiss. Jerry gets angry and grabs and pushes Susan. Participants then answered on a scale from 1 "definitely yes" to 9 "definitely no" about how confident they were that "Jerry should have shoved his girlfriend." Analysis of variance indicated that there was a significant interaction between gender and video exposure (Johnson et al., 1995). Acceptance of the use of violence did not vary as a function of exposure for male subjects (i.e., it made no

difference for the boys). However, female subjects who were exposed to the videos showed greater acceptance of the violence than females who were not exposed ($p<.001$). Although pre-test levels of violence acceptance was not measured, the results showed that girls' acceptance of violence after exposure was equal to that of the boys ($M = 3.6$ vs. $M = 3.7$). These findings may suggest that boys likely had stronger pre-acceptance of violence than females, but that exposure to the videos brought the girls' acceptance of violence up to the level of the boys.

In summary, experimental evidence has shown a small but significant effect of brief exposure to sexualised media of women on girls' body satisfaction (Groesz et al., 2002) and that brief exposure to sexualised media can influence girls' acceptance of dating violence (Johnson et al., 1995). The meaning of the "small" experimental effect size should be interpreted within context of how media theoretically influences girls in their daily lives. In these experiments, girls were exposed once to one small dose of the media stimulus and its direct effect in the short-term is measured. However, a small dose of media is not what is theoretically of concern. Rather, it is the cumulative, long-term effect of being bombarded daily by these media images. This much larger cumulative exposure may lead girls to internalize demeaning ideas and beliefs, which in turn may lead to negative health consequences. Further, the experimental model only addresses the direct, causal influence between exposure and harmful effects (Kazdin, 2003). However, media sexualisation almost certainly influences girls indirectly as well (e.g., by influencing other socializing agents, who in turn influence girls). Thus, the full relationship between media and negative consequences for girls is difficult to measure experimentally. The finding that exposure to a very limited amount of images for a very short period of time consistently produces negative effects for girls suggests that the real-world experience of media sexualisation may be far more harmful.

Empirical evidence of self-sexualisation by girls. The next line of evidence concerns survey findings that girls who have internalized a sexualised identity experience more negative mental health consequences than those who have not. Slater and Tiggemann (2002) tested the components of objectification theory in a sample of Caucasian, medium to high socio-economic status adolescent girls (*M* age = 14; range 12–16 years; *n* = 83). Self-objectification was measured with the Self-Objectification Questionnaire (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998), on which respondents rank the importance of 10 body attributes based on appearance (e.g., sex appeal) and 10 based on competence (e.g., health). Scores are obtained by calculating the difference between the sum of appearance rankings and the sum of competence rankings (positive scores indicate greater emphasis on objectification (alpha = .80 in sample). A second variable, body shame was measured with the Body Shame subscale of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). This subscale is comprised of eight items, such as "I feel like I am bad person when I don't look as good as I should," rated on a seven-point scale from 1 "strongly agree" to 7 "strongly disagree" (higher scores indicate people who feel badly they do not conform to the cultural ideal) (alpha = .80 in sample). A third variable, appearance anxiety, was assessed with the Appearance Anxiety Scale (Dion, Dion, & Kellan, 1990), consisting of 14 items, such as "I worry about how others are evaluating my body," rated on a five-point scale from 0 "never" to 4 "almost always." Higher scores indicate more anxiety (alpha = .92 for sample). A fourth variable, disordered eating, was assessed with the EAT-26 (Garner & Garfinkel, 1979), consisting of 26 behaviours (e.g., self-induced vomiting) rated on a six-point scale ranging from "0" never to "4" always (alpha = .90 for sample).

Self-objectification was significantly, directly correlated with body shame, appearance anxiety, and disordered eating (correlations ranged from *r*= .43 to .64) (Slater & Tiggemann,

2002). In addition, the results of a series of multiple regressions indicated that self-objectification significantly predicted disordered eating and that the relationship between self-objectification and disordered eating was partially mediated by body shame and appearance anxiety. For self-objectification, the beta value (initially .56, $p<.05$) was substantially reduced to .28 ($p< .05$) when the effects of body shame and appearance anxiety were controlled, but remained statistically significant. This means that self-objectification has both a direct effect on disordered eating and an indirect effect mediated by body shame and appearance anxiety. This study shows that self-objectification and its consequences of body shame, appearance anxiety, and eating disorders are pertinent to girls as young as 12 years of age.

Slater and Tiggemann's (2002) results have been replicated with samples of ethnically and socio-economically diverse girls age 12-18, which supports that generalization that body objectification is directly related to range of negative health consequences for all girls (Impett, Schooler, & Tolman, 2006; Tolman, Tracy, Michael, & Impett, 2006). For example, Impett et al. (2006) used structural equation modelling to show that body objectification (measured via self-report questionnaire) is significantly associated with more sexual intercourse partners and more unprotected sex, after controlling for ethnicity and SES. Impett et al. hypothesize that adolescent girls who objectify their bodies may find it difficult to be assertive during sexual activity, when bodies are exposed and vulnerable to evaluation, leading to poor sexual health behaviours.

Similarly, Tolman et al. (2006) used structural equation modelling to determine that, for eighth grade girls, body objectification was significantly, inversely related to self-esteem and directly related to depression (using self-report measures). Body objectification accounted for 54% of the variance in depression and 62% of the variance in self-esteem ($p<.001$ for both equations), after controlling for ethnicity and SES. Tolman et al. concluded that the amount of

variance accounted for provides “powerful” evidence that internalizing sexualised beliefs is associated with poor psychological well-being in adolescent girls.

Grabe and Hyde (2009) examined the role that sexually objectifying media (i.e., music television) had on a host of psychological consequences in a community sample of 195 U.S. adolescent girls who had all just completed the 7th grade (*M* = 13.2 years, 89.4% Caucasian). In their study, participants completed questionnaires related to their music media consumption and psychological status (e.g., eating disorders, depression) on a laptop in a home visit. Specifically, the measure used for music television consumption asked how often they watch music television (MTV, BET, and music videos in general) (never, once a week, 2-5 times a week, or every day). They measured body-objectification with the Self-surveillance subscale of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale for Youth (Lindberg, Hyde, & McKinley, 2006), which includes items like “during the day I think about how I look many times,” measured on a scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) . Body-esteem was measured with the Body Image subscale of the Self-image Questionnaire for Young Adolescents (Brooks-Gunn, Rock, & Warren, 1989), which includes items such as, “Most of the time I am happy with the way I look,” measured on a 6 point scale. Current dieting status was measured with the question, “Are you currently on a diet, yes or no?” Depressive symptoms were assessed with the Children’s Depression Inventory (CDI; Kovacs, 1981; 1985), which includes 27 items tapping cognitive, affective, and behavioural symptoms of childhood depression. Anxiety was measured using the short version of the Trait Anxiety Scale from the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (Speilberger, Edwards, Lushene Montouri, & Platzek, 1973) asking the child to focus on the last week and rating the experience of 11 descriptors (e.g., nervous) on a 3-point scale. Lastly, math confidence was measured with three items to assess self-concept in math ability, namely, “How good are

you at math"; "If you were to rank all the students in your math class from the worst to the best in math, where would you be?"; and "Compared to most of the other school subjects, how good at math are you?" rated on a 7 point scale (much worse to much better).

Grabe and Hyde (2009) hypothesized that music television consumption would, first and foremost, be associated with body-objectification, which in turn would predict a number of body related consequences. The findings supported this model in which body-objectification mediates a direct relationship between music television viewing and body esteem, dieting, depressive symptoms, anxiety and confidence in math ability, thereby supporting objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 2007). The results further indicated that, as expected, significant associations emerged between music video consumption and lowered body-esteem, dieting, anxiety and math confidence. Structural equation modeling indicated that the direct relation between media consumption and negative psychological outcomes could be explained in part by levels of body-objectification. One explanation of these results is that girls' exposure to the televised sexual objectification of women cultivates a particular view of the self that emphasizes the importance of physical appearance. As such, it is possible that, after viewing a media genre that is replete with images of sexualised female bodies, girls begin to view themselves as objects, valued only based on their appearance.

Starr and Ferguson (2012) conducted an empirical study examining self-sexualisation by 60 girls age 6-9 (M = 7.78, SD = .98) in the U.S. as a consequence of exposure to sexualised media. Girls were recruited from two public grade schools and from a dance studio. Forty-seven of their mothers also participated in the study. Most mothers (77%) self-identified as Caucasian. Girls were presented with two paper dolls. One was sexily clad and one was not. The sexy doll was wearing clothing that was skin-tight, with a low cut shirt with midriff showing and short

jeans, whereas the non-sexualised doll was wearing a stylish, but non sexualised “v” neck sweater, belt, and cargo pants. The girls were asked to circle one of the paper doll pictures in response to each of four questions: (a) “Which doll do you think looks most like you? (actual self); (b) “If you could look like one of these two dolls, which one would you like to look like?” (ideal self); (c) “Leila is the most popular girl in school. She was many friends and many people want to sit next to her at the lunch table. Which doll is Leila?” (popularity attribution); and (d) “Which doll would you like to play with? (play preference). Mothers completed questionnaires at home related to potential risk and protective factors for girls’ self-sexualisation. These questionnaires assessed (a) daughters’ media consumption (each mother reported the number of weekly hours of TV and movies their daughter viewed), (b) maternal self-objectification (i.e., the extent to which the mother self-objectifies herself as measured by the Body Surveillance subscale of the Objectified Body Consciousness scale; McKinley & Hyde 1996), and (c) the extent to which the mother mediates her daughters’ TV and movie viewing, as measured by the Television Mediation scale (Valkenburg, 1999). This scale includes (a) restrictive mediation (e.g., how often do you forbid your child to watch certain programs?), (b) instructive mediation (e.g. how often do you point out why some things actors do are bad?”, and (c) social co-viewing (e.g., “how often do you watch together just for fun?). Additionally they measured mother’s importance of religiosity, measured from 1 (not important) to 3 (very important), and mother’s active level of teaching religious values to their daughters. The latter was measured by questions such as “how important do you think it is to teach your children religious values?”

Chi-square analyses revealed that girls were significantly more likely to choose the sexualised doll than the non-sexualised doll as popular and as their ideal self, but not for actual self (“looks like you”) and play preference (Starr & Ferguson, 2012). These findings suggest that

there is a good reason to be concerned about the early sexualisation of girls, as young as age 6. The pressure young girls feel to be sexy in order to be popular may be part of why they prefer the sexy look. They may anticipate that there will be social advantages for buying into the sexualisation of girls, such as popularity, as well as fear social rejection if they do not. On the other hand, dance studio enrolment was a protective factor. Proportionally, more dancers than public school girls chose the non-sexualised doll for actual self (100%, 14/14 dancers vs. 30%, 14/47 public school girls), ideal self (62%, 8/14 dancers vs. 23%, 11/47 public school girls), and popularity attribution (69%, 9/14 dancers vs. 17%, 8/47 public school girls). Starr and Ferguson conclude that one possible explanation is that females involved in physical activities are less prone to sexualisation because they become aware that their bodies can be used for purposes other than looking sexy or attractive to males.

Starr and Ferguson (2012) employed hierarchal, binary, logistic regression analyses to predict the probability that girls would choose the sexualised doll based on various risk factors (e.g., hours watching media) and protective factors (e.g., maternal religiosity). One-way analyses of variance were used to further investigate significant interactions. As indicated earlier, the vast majority of girls choose the sexualised doll over the non-sexualised doll as their ideal self and as popular. Regarding media consumption as a risk factor, the results indicated that girls' media consumption (e.g., hours of T.V. and movies watched) alone was unrelated to doll choice. They also found that maternal self-objectification was not in itself a risk factor (i.e., there was no main effect of maternal self-objectification on doll choice). However, they found that there was an interaction between girls' media consumption and maternal self-objectification on popularity attribution ($p<.05$). Maternal self-objectification moderated the effect of girls' high media consumption. That is, daughters with higher media consumption who also have mothers who

take a more objectified view of their own body were more likely to equate the sexualised doll with popularity.

Starr and Ferguson (2012) state that the above finding may mean that high media consumption predisposes young girls towards early sexualisation, which is only realized for girls whose mothers display reinforcing, self-objectifying attitudes and behaviour. Consistent with this interpretation, girls with low media consumption whose mothers' had high self-objectification were not found to be more at-risk of preferring the sexy doll in this study. Alternatively, girls of highly self-objectifying mothers may model their mothers' self-objectified attitudes and behaviours and effectively begin to self-sexualize in the presence of myriad reinforcing images afforded by high media consumption.

Regarding protective factors, maternal instructive TV mediation and maternal religiosity both reduced the odds that girls would choose the sexy doll as their ideal and as popular (Starr & Ferguson, 2012). In regard to maternal instructive TV mediation, it was found that, for each one point increase on the 4-point scale, the odds that their daughter would choose the sexy doll as their ideal decreased by 89%. Recall that this scale measured mothers' responses to questions such as "how often do you point out why some things actors do are bad?" In regards to maternal religiosity, for each one point increase on the 3-point maternal instructive religiosity scale, the odds that their daughter would choose the sexy doll as popular decreased by 87%. According to Starr and Ferguson, mothers who see religion as personally important may be more likely to model higher body-esteem and communicate values such as modesty, thereby lessening the likelihood that their daughters will aspire to look sexy or play with the sexy looking doll despite what they see in TV or movies.

A final finding was that girls whose mothers restricted their media consumption (low media consumption and restrictive mediation) and were also highly religious were significantly more likely to rate the sexy doll as popular and ideal. According to Starr and Ferguson (2012), this pattern of results may reflect a case of "forbidden fruit" or reactance, whereby girls who are "overprotected" from the media by highly religious parents through restriction of TV and movie viewing may begin to idealize the forbidden due to their under-exposure. This may indicate that proactive education about media sexualisation is more effective in preventing self-objectification in girls than is simply restricting consumption. Future research is needed to test this.

In summary, empirical evidence indicates that internalizing self-objectification is related to a wide range of health problems in girls, as predicted by objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). These problems include body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, sexual risk-taking, depression, and low self-esteem. These studies demonstrate that (a) girls as young as 6 have internalized the sexualised standards found in the media and (b) such internalization is directly associated with multiple negative health consequences for many girls.

In conclusion, self-report surveys (e.g., Slater & Tiggemann, 2002), cross-cultural studies (e.g., Becker et al., 2002), and experiments (e.g., Groesz et al.,, 2002) provide converging evidence that media sexualisation is harmful for girls in a number of ways, including body dissatisfaction, appearance anxiety, eating disorders, depression, low-self-esteem, risky sexual behaviour, and acceptance of dating violence. Of course, each research method has limitations and the results based on each method must be considered in light of those limitations. For example, a limitation of self-report is that it is subject to social desirability bias, the tendency for people to present themselves in a manner that is viewed favourably by others (Aquilino, Wright, & Supple, 2000). When a topic is threatening or sensitive (as rating one's body or appearance

may be for girls), social desirability may lead to distorted reporting on the survey (e.g., presenting oneself overly favourably) (Schaeffer, 2000). Therefore, if anything, self-report surveys (e.g., Slater & Tiggemann, 2002) may have under-estimated the relationship between body objectification and negative consequences. This is because survey respondents may have presented themselves as being less negatively affected than they truly are. In any case, the main point remains that repeated findings from studies using multiple methods overcome the individual limitations associated with each method. Together, these studies strongly support the proposition that sexualisation is, indeed, harmful for girls. Nonetheless, the literature examining the influence of sexualised media on girls is still relatively sparse and gaps remain that, if filled, would more clearly illuminate the effect of sexualised media on girls (APA, 2007). These gaps are discussed next.

Gaps in the literature regarding consequences of media sexualisation for girls. The first gap concerns ambiguity in the description of the media image. Sexualisation was not specifically operationally defined in most studies. For example, the experimental studies examined effects of exposure to culturally attractive female models and not "sexualisation" (Groesz et al., 2002). It can be reasonably inferred that these cultural images were sexualised, based upon strong research evidence that media females are routinely sexually objectified (APA, 2007). Nonetheless, some of the studies reviewed (e.g., Groesz et al.) are ambiguous regarding the media image to which the girls are reacting. Research is needed to clarify that sexualised messages/images are at issue and are related to harmful consequences.

The second gap is that sexualised media has been examined relative to a fairly small range of health consequences for girls (e.g., body dissatisfaction, inappropriate sexual behaviours). Empirical research conducted with women suggests that sexualisation is related to a

much larger range of variables, including physical health (e.g., cigarette smoking) and educational achievement (e.g., lower leadership aspirations) (see APA, 2007 for a review). Girls may well react to sexualisation similarly to women. If this is the case, research exploring a wider variety of health consequences of media sexualisation for girls is warranted. Further, how girls interpret media messages and how such messages influence girls' identity development may take multiple and complex paths. Thus, due to developmental factors, girls may be influenced by sexualised media in ways that are unique to their stage of development and unlike older females. In particular, qualitative research that would be especially well-suited to address these issues is largely absent from the literature regarding potential consequences and reactions to viewing this media (Thompson, 2011).

The third gap concerns potentially differential consequences of sexualisation on girls of different ages. Girls transitioning through different developmental periods (e.g., early vs. late adolescence) may react differently to media. As one hypothesis, early adolescent girls' attitudes and beliefs about gender and sex may be the primary consequence of sexualised media, whereas health consequences may be the primary consequence for older adolescents, who have had more time to internalize and act upon those messages. Research examining the influence of media sexualisation on girls across adolescence would better elucidate how media sexualisation interferes with developmental trajectories for girls.

Lastly, research is needed to examine how cultural variables (e.g., ethnicity, socio-economic status) are related to the influence of sexualised media on girls. Social structures such as class and ethnicity may interact with gender identity development in complex ways (Pyke, 1996). Therefore, girls of different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds may perceive sexualised media images and their intended meaning in different ways. For example, media

images may prompt middle-and upper-middle class girls to attempt to emulate a sexualised image of power and economic success. In contrast, the same media images may prompt poor girls to decide they will always lack access to the resources necessary for such things. Consequently, poor girls may foster another aspect of sexualisation, namely early sexual activity and pregnancy, to attempt to create a positive self and social identity (Impett, Schooler, & Tolman, 2006; Wesley, 2009).

Present Research

This research attempts to fill some of the gaps in the literature pertaining to the prevalence of sexualisation of girls in the media and the consequences of such sexualisation. The purpose of this research was to (a) assess the frequency with which girls are sexualised in two influential types of media; (b) determine if such sexualisation has increased over time; and (c) explore directly with girls the consequences of viewing sexualised images on them. To answer these research questions, a mixed methods research design was utilized. A mixed methods research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and "mixing" both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem (Creswell, 2008). It is useful when one type of research (qualitative or quantitative) is not enough to address the research problem or answer the research questions (Creswell, 2008). More specifically, a convergent parallel design was utilized (Creswell, 2008). Within the convergent design, the researcher collects quantitative and qualitative data concurrently, analyzes the qualitative and quantitative data separately, and merges the results during interpretation. It is chosen when both types of data have equal value for understanding the research problem.

First, a quantitative content analysis of trends in sexualisation of girls in selected mass media over time was conducted. This content analysis focused on the prevalence of sexualisation

of girls in music videos and teen magazines. This research examined if sexualisation of girls is becoming more prevalent (i.e., there is a higher proportion in recent years than earlier years) and if it is related to the age (e.g., child, adolescent) and ethnicity of the girls being sexualised. Magazines and music videos from 1992-2008 were sampled. This time period was considered long enough to find a trend, if present. As stated previously, better understanding of the phenomenon of sexualisation of girls (i.e., females under the age of 18) in the media is important because it may be more damaging to girls than is media sexualising women (Choate & Curry, 2009).

Second, qualitative focus groups were conducted with adolescent girls. In the focus groups, girls were exposed to media of sexualised girls and young women from some of the music videos and ads identified in the content analysis. The purpose of the focus groups was to qualitatively assess how adolescent girls' make meaning of, and are influenced by, sexualised media messages about girls. Focus groups were utilized because the research questions are exploratory and seek to understand girls' thoughts, feelings, and opinions about sexualised media messages. An advantage of using qualitative methodology is the ability to examine the meaning that individuals ascribe to their own and collective experiences (Mooney et al., 2004). Therefore, conducting focus groups permitted exploration of complex processes involved in the construction and internalization of girls' views on sexualisation in a way not possible in quantitative studies. Another benefit of qualitative research generally, and focus groups specifically, is its utility in new areas of research for theory generation and hypothesis creation (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Given that girls may respond to media in ways different than women, and little past research has been conducted with girls, qualitative research may be the most

suitable approach for understanding how girls specifically understand and respond to sexualised media (Thompson, 2010).

Study 1: Quantitative Content Analysis

Research Questions

The research questions guiding Study 1 were: (a) what is the prevalence (proportion) of sexualisation of girls in the sample of both girls' magazines advertisements and music videos; (b) what is the prevalence (proportion) of extreme forms of sexualisation of girls (i.e., sexualisation rated as strong) in the media samples; and (c) what is the proportion of adult females who are infantilized (i.e., both sexualised and portrayed in ways that resemble children) in the media samples. These questions are expressed more specifically in the following hypotheses.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1(a): A larger proportion of sexualised girl images will be contained in magazine advertisements published in recent years than in earlier years.

The rationale is that sexualisation of girls has been argued to have been increasing in media (e.g., APA, 2007). Therefore, a higher prevalence of sexualised girl images should be found in the most recent years.

Hypotheses 1(b)*:* A larger proportion of sexualised girl images will be contained in music videos published in recent years than in earlier years.

Again, because the sexualisation of girls has been argued to have been increasing in media (APA, 2007), a higher prevalence of sexualised girls images should be found in the most recent years.

Hypothesis 2(a)*:* A larger proportion of extreme depictions of sexualised girls (i.e., those rated as strong sexualisation) will be contained in magazine advertisements published in recent years than in earlier years.

It has been argued that the severity of sexualisation has been increasing in media (e.g., on the continuum of sexualisation, images that are violent or degrading) (APA, 2007). If this is true for girls, more strongly sexualised images should be found in the most recent years.

Hypothesis 2(b): A larger proportion of extreme depictions of sexualised girls (i.e., those rated as strong sexualisation) will be contained in music videos published in recent years than in earlier years.

Again, if the severity of sexualisation has been increasing in media (e.g., on the continuum of sexualisation, images that are violent or degrading) in media for girls, then more strongly sexualised images should be found in most recent years.

Hypothesis 3(a): A larger proportion of the media images of African-American and Hispanic-American girls will be sexualised than images of Caucasian girls in the sample of magazine advertisements.

It has been argued that African-American and other minority females are specifically at-risk of being portrayed in sexualised ways in the media (e.g., Ward, 2013). If this holds true for girls, a higher proportion of African-American and Hispanic-American girls should be sexualised than Caucasian girls in the sample of magazine advertisements.

Hypothesis 3(b): A larger proportion of media images of African-American and Hispanic-American girls will be sexualised than images of Caucasian girls in the sample of music videos.

Again, if African American and other minority females are at greater risk of being portrayed in sexualised ways in the media (e.g., Ward, 2013), it stands to reason that a higher proportion of African-American and Hispanic-American girls should be sexualised than Caucasian girls in the sample of music videos.

Method

Content Analysis

As indicated previously, to answer these research questions and hypotheses, a quantitative content analysis of magazine advertisements and music videos was conducted. The methodology employed followed Neuendorf's (2002) definition of content analysis as a "summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method, including attention to objectivity/inter-subjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing" (Neuendorf, 2002, p.10).

Magazine advertisement sample creation. For adequate quantitative analysis, a relatively large sample of advertisements from magazines read by a relatively large population of adolescent girls was required. Attempts were made to obtain issues from two particular magazines, Seventeen and Teen, which are exceptional in that they have been in circulation from 1992 to the present. This broad time frame was desirable because sampling from both older and more recent years would provide the best indicator of trends in advertising. Further, sampling from the same two magazines was desirable in order to avoid introducing unnecessary sources of variability into the study (as would have occurred if various magazine titles were sampled). Finally, it was desirable to sample ads from these particular magazines because they are widely circulated among girls. Based on sales of individual issues, Seventeen reaches over 14.5 million 12-24 year-olds, nearly six million of which are 12-19 year-olds and nearly two million of which are 17-18 year olds (*http://www.seventeen.com/*). Similarly, Teen magazine reaches an audience of nearly six million 12-18 year-old girls (http://*www.teenmag.com*). The wide readership of these magazines means that ads in them are likely influential in the lives of many girls. It was predetermined that the magazine sample would include issues from the years 1992, 1994, 1996,

1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008. Sampling every two years across 1992-2008 was decided because it provided a wide enough range to detect a trend, if one was present. Sampling every second year, as opposed to every year, was more feasible in terms of both locating all the desired magazines for the sample and also having coders complete the coding process in a reasonable time period without undue fatigue. The sampling strategy entailed drawing magazine ads from the same three months during each of those years, namely February, June, and November. These months were chosen purposively as representing the beginning, middle, and end of the calendar year.

Attempts were first made to obtain the desired magazines by locating them via the Winnipeg Public Library or by purchasing back orders from the magazine publishers. These methods were unsuccessful in obtaining full sets of either Seventeen or Teen magazines. Next, attempts were made to obtain the magazines from an online auction site, *EBAY*, as well as from online used magazine sellers. With these additional methods, all of the Seventeen magazines needed for the desired sample were secured. Unfortunately, these methods secured Teen magazines only from the years 1992 through 2000. Moreover, although some Teen magazines from these years were secured, they were not necessarily the issues from February, June and November of those years. The researcher obtained some from January and September. In addition, it was not possible to locate any Teen magazines from more recent years (2002-2008). One final attempt was made at contacting libraries outside of Winnipeg, across Canada (Vancouver and Toronto), but they did not have Teen magazines.

In the end, the sample of Teen magazines was still quite incomplete and would not have permitted analysis of either the current prevalence of sexualised advertising involving girls or

trends over time. Therefore, the decision was made to exclude Teen magazines from the analyses (i.e., to only analyze Seventeen magazines).

Music video sample creation. To create a sample of music videos, lists of MTV music video award winners and nominees for all categories (e.g., best music video) from 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008 were examined. These lists are available on-line from MTV's website, which also provides links to the videos *(http://mtv.com/ontv/vma/)*. MTV is a highly popular television program watched by teenagers (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005). Thus, the content is likely highly influential for girls. Using a list of award nominees is justified because it likely represents the videos that were played most on MTV and, therefore, likely reached a wide audience. In addition, music video nominees are played often and, therefore, girls are likely repeatedly exposed to them. The sample was comprised of all music videos that were nominees for every award category listed.

Units of Analysis

In regard to the Seventeen magazine advertisements, all ads with at least one image of a female were analyzed, so long as they were clearly a female and visible. The total number of images coded across the advertisements was quite large (n = 2290), which helps ensure reliability and generalizability. See Table 1 for an overview of the number of ads and females coded by year.

In regard to the music videos, videos with at least one image of a female of any age comprised the sample. Females that were not clearly visible were excluded. For example, if a music video contained a scene that included an entire concert audience, only those females who were able to been clearly seen were rated (e.g., not females who were far off in the back of the crowd and unable to be clearly seen because they were too far away and/or their bodies are

Table 1

Number of Magazine Ads and Females Coded by Year

	Number of Ads	Number of Images Coded
1992	74	148
1994	87	145
1996	115	293
1998	157	298
2000	168	327
2002	262	361
2004	120	269
2006	205	222
2008	124	227
Totals	1312	2290

blocked by other individuals). The total number of females coded across the videos was quite large (*n* = 3228), which helps ensure stability and generalizability of results. Table 2 shows the number of females and videos coded per year.

There appears to be a pattern for both magazine ads and music videos of the numbers of females increasing steadily, peaking in 2002, and then declining. After an examination of the magazine ads and females, the researcher was unable to determine any specific reason for this pattern. There was simply more ads in 2000 and 2002, and there were more females on average per ad in 2002. In regard to music videos, there were more videos nominated overall in 2002 than in other years. This is due, in part, to fewer music videos being nominated in multiple categories. Of course, the same music video being nominated across multiple categories decreased the potential total number of music video nominees overall.

Another observation made by the researcher was that, peaking in 2000, there was an increase in the number of music video nominees from the hip-hop and rap genres. In general, it was observed that more females were found in music videos of these genres than in other genres, such as pop and rock. Generally speaking, although there are exceptions, hip hop and rap genre videos often portrayed dance videos with one male singer and numerous females dancing. Conversely, other genres, such as rock or heavy metal, were more apt to feature performance videos with a band (usually male) playing and just a few females dancing. Other genres also tended to consist of dramatic videos featuring a story line and actors, with few female actors overall (although there were exceptions). Thus, the increase in overall number of rap and hip hop genres as nominees may account for the increased number of females in videos coded in later years (i.e., 2000 on, generally), as opposed to earlier years (i.e., 1992-1998).

Table 2

Number of Music Videos and Images Coded by Year

	Number of Music Videos	Number of Images Coded
1992	27	206
1994	34	223
1996	40	298
1998	45	379
2000	40	465
2002	53	556
2004	43	435
2006	38	388
2008	35	278
Totals	315	3228

Decision to rate all females of any age. The decision to rate advertisements and music videos containing both girls and women was based in part on a desire to be able to identify images of women being infantilized (e.g., sexualised and made to look like children) (Machia & Lamb, 2009). The American Psychological Association (2007) specifically describes sexy adult women being made to look like little girls (such as sucking on lollipops or playing with dolls) as being a specific example of sexualisation of girls. It pertains to the fourth aspect of their sexualisation definition, namely that sexuality is inappropriately imposed on children in the media. Further, Levin and Kilbourne (2008) and Durham (2008) report concern about the "Lolita" theme in marketing and media, which portrays young women as sexualised children and which resembles child pornography. Further, rating and then analyzing images of women would allow for comparison of the relative proportion of sexualisation of girls vs. adults.

Coders

The coders were Psychology student research assistants who attended either the University of Manitoba or the University of Winnipeg, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. They were kept blind to the specific research questions and hypotheses. There were four coders in total (three females, one male). Three were undergraduate Honours students and one was a graduate student. All were in their twenties and all were Caucasian. Two research assistants coded the music videos and two research assistants coded the magazine advertisements. The four coders were recruited via posting an email sent to psychology students that advertised for research assistants. Each coder was paid a stipend of $500 CDN. This stipend was made possible in part by a Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) research grant awarded to the researcher.

Coding Instrument

A Coding Instrument designed by the researcher was used to code the age, ethnicity, and sexualisation of each female image. The construction of the sexualisation codes on the instrument followed content analyses guidelines to ensure reliability and validity (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). To ensure construct validity, operationalization of sexualisation was based upon the four components of APA's (2007) definition, as well as specific examples of each component from APA. Sexualisation was also operationalized using other literature pertaining to the definition of sexualisation and specific characteristics that represent sexualisation of girls (e.g., Levin & Kilbourne, 2008). APA's definition was provided for the coders, as well as a list of characteristics that indicate sexualisation, such as "bare midriff/stomach showing" and "low-cut tops emphasizing breasts/cleavage" (see Appendix B).

Coders examined the list of sexualising characteristics contained on the Coding Instrument and judged sexualisation to be present if any of those characteristics applied to the female being rated. That is, sexualisation was coded categorically, yes or no. The decision to judge sexualisation as being present or not, on one overall dimension, is in keeping with the definition of sexualisation given by the American Psychological Association (2007). APA defines sexualisation as comprised of four components that are inter-related and overlap (i.e., are not separate) (APA, 2007). Therefore, a list of characteristics related to each of the inter-related four components of sexualisation was given to the coders, but each component was not intended to be coded independently by the coders.

Strong sexualisation. According to APA (2007), sexualisation can be seen as existing on a continuum from mild to strong. Coders judged what has been conceptualized specifically as strong forms of sexualisation on the severity continuum (APA, 2007). These forms include

sexual harassment, violence and victimization, or sexualisation that is otherwise degrading and highly offensive (APA, 2007; Bissonnette, 2007; Choate & Curry, 2009). To ensure construct validity of strong sexualisation, the APA definition of strong sexualisation was given to the coders. Specific characteristics that would indicate strong sexualisation were also given to the coders to judge. If coders determined that sexualisation was present, they next determined if that sexualisation met the definition of strong sexualisation (categorically, yes or no).

Infantilized women. On the Coding Instrument, if coders decided that a female who appeared to be an adult was sexualised, they then were asked if she was portrayed in a way that was infantilized (Machia & Lamb, 2009; APA, 2007). Operationally, they assessed categorically (yes or no) whether the female displayed child-like characteristics, such as being posed with a teddy bear, sucking on a lollipop, or wearing pig-tails.

Age and ethnicity. Coders judged the age of each female present as either child (12 and under), teenager (13 to 17), or adult (18+). Coders also judged the ethnicity of the females as Caucasian, African-American, Hispanic-American, or Other. Although African-American and Hispanic-American women are traditionally stereotyped in a sexualised manner (APA, 2007), some ethnic minority females, particularly from traditional and conservative cultures (e.g., East Indian, Asian) may be portrayed in the media as less sexualised, in terms of frequency and/or degree, than other females. Therefore, these ethnicities were coded separately on the instrument.

Procedures for Training Coders and Fine-Tuning Instrument

The procedure for training coders and conducting the coding was based on established guidelines for content analysis research (Lombard et al., 2002). The researcher met with the four research assistants (coders) together as a group for an introductory meeting. During this meeting, the responsibilities of the coders were outlined and an overview of the research project was

discussed. The coders were provided with the APA (2007) taskforce definitions and descriptions of sexualisation of girls. In addition, they were given the first version of the Coding Instrument to review. We examined a few examples of sexualised media images as a group. Coders were instructed to read the handouts containing the definitions and examples of sexualisation to become familiar with this construct. Coders were not told of the specific hypotheses. The coders were then assigned to either the music videos (two coders) or the magazine advertisements (two coders). This assignment was based on coder preference regarding the types of media (i.e., two wanted ads and two wanted videos).

After the coders had time to review the handout and the Coding Instrument, we met again. This time the researcher met with the two music video coders and the two magazine advertisement coders separately. During these meetings, the Coding Instrument was reviewed and coders were asked if they had any questions, comments, or concerns with regard to using the instrument. Together the researcher and coders used the instrument to code a small sample of magazine advertisements or music videos. This allowed the coders to develop a better understanding of the instrument and its application. It also allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of problems (e.g., wording of items) that might need to be corrected to improve reliability.

During these meetings, coders flagged difficulty rating the age of the females. On the original Coding Instrument (in use at the time of pre-test), coders were asked to rate if a teenage-appearing female was an early adolescent (age 13 to 14; roughly pertaining to grade 7 to 9) or a late adolescent (15 to 17; roughly pertaining to grade 10-12). We went over techniques that potentially could be used for rating this aspect. These included using cues from the ad or music video. For example, is a junior high or a high school in the ad or video? Is there a grade on a

doorway shown? Is there small print or lyrics related to the age in the ad or the song? We also examined examples of teenage models whose age we knew. Could these adolescent media examples of known age be used as anchors for comparison? Anecdotally, it appeared that some or all of these techniques could help to judge the age of teenagers, at least in some cases. Despite the coders concern regarding rating early vs. late adolescents, it was decided to retain this distinction.

Next, coders were given the pre-test sample of either magazine ads or music videos to code independently on their own time, using the Coding Instrument. Once the coders had completed this pretest, reliability statistics were computed. According to Lombard et al. (2002), content analysis research involves first coding a pre-test of media (before coding the sample proper) using a sample equal to roughly 10% of the full sample. An estimated number of magazine ads and videos equal to 10% of the total number of advertisements were determined, based on the estimated number of advertisements and music videos identified for the sample-proper. The pre-test sample consisted of three magazines and one year of MTV award show nominees. Specifically, the pre-test ads came from the following Seventeen issues: May 2008, July 2009 and November 2009 (*n* females = 322). Similarly, the videos for the pre-test came from the MTV video awards lists of 2009 (*n* females = 308), chosen because they reflected content similar to that which would be used in the analysis proper.

Coders independently rated the pre-test ads or videos. Inter-rater reliability was assessed using Cohen's kappa statistic. Cohen's kappa yields a conservative estimate of reliability by taking coder agreement based on chance into consideration (Dewey, 1983). Kappa was set at .70. There is no precise cut-off for what constitutes acceptable reliability in content analysis (Weber, 1990), but a standard of at least $k = .70$ generally constitutes good reliability. As per Lombard et

al. 2002, the pre-test was used to determine if the instrument, or some portion of the instrument, initially was not adequately reliable. If such is the case, the disagreed-upon ads and videos may be examined and the instrument may be revised as necessary and as desired, prior to the analysis-proper.

The reliability statistics of the pre-test for the music videos were as follows: child (k = .91); early adolescent (k = .37); late adolescent (k = .62); adult (k = .88); Caucasian (k = .96); African American (k = .94); Hispanic-American (k = .79); any sexualisation (k = .76); strong sexualisation (k = .86); and women infantilized (k = .83). Reliability improved considerably when early and late adolescent ratings were collapsed into one ‘adolescent’ rating (k = .76).

For the magazine advertisements, the pre-test reliability statistics were as follows: child (k = .80); early adolescent (k = .32); late adolescent (k = .69); adult (k = .90); Caucasian (k = .96); African American (k = .96); Hispanic-American (k = .87); any sexualisation (k = .82); strong sexualisation (k = .83); and women being infantilized (k = .77). Again, reliability improved when early adolescents and late adolescent ratings were collapsed into one adolescent rating (k = .79).

Next, I met with each set of coders to examine the images that lead to disagreement. It appeared that the inability of the coders to reliably code early vs. late adolescent females was likely not a problem with the coders or instrument but, rather, simply an aspect of the phenomenon itself (i.e., it is difficult to reliably determine the age of teenage girls precisely). This conclusion was supported by the fact that (a) coders were able to reliably code “teenage” females and (b) a similar pattern was found for both sets of coders and media. Thus, it was decided to collapse early and late adolescent into one category.

Next, the coders were each given their lists of magazines or music videos to code for the analysis proper. They were told to work at their own pace and to provide their coding to the

researcher as they completed it (i.e., not all at once at the end). Therefore, the coding could be examined continuously to flag issues of concern, such as proper use of the Coding Instrument, coder drift, missing data, and so forth. The researcher spoke to or met with the coders every few weeks to review their progress. In general, our discussions indicated that coders did not experience any significant troubles with the job.

Reliability

Once all the ads and videos were coded, reliability was assessed again. For the Seventeen ads, acceptable reliability was achieved. All variables met the .70 criterion (see Table 3). After reliability was calculated, the researcher met with coders to go through each of the disagreed-upon ads and videos. The two coders would discuss the ad or video in question to determine if they could agree on the rating. For nearly all ads and videos in question (99%), the coders were able to come to an agreement. In the few cases in which they still disagreed, the researcher provided a tie-breaking vote. At this point, coders were thanked for their conscientious work and were given their stipend.

The second reliability issue in content analysis research is stability, which is the ability of the coders to consistently assign the same code to a given stimulus over time (Weber, 1990). Ads and videos were coded in alternate order (e.g., all media content to be coded was assigned to raters in different order (i.e., one coder starting at year 1992 and worked forward; the other starting at 2008 and worked backwards) because it is possible that raters become sensitized or desensitized to the images as they are coding (e.g., coder drift). Thus, coders could start rating more sexualisation or less sexualisation as they progress through the coding process. Having them code the ads and videos in different order (i.e., not both rating the media in the same yearly order) reliably guarded against both raters drifting in the same direction.

Table 3

Reliability Statistics (Kappa Levels) for Coding Magazine Advertisements and Music Videos

Variable	Magazine Advertisements	Music Videos
Child	.93	.78
Teenager	.82	.83
Adult	.83	.86
Caucasian	.89	.92
African-American	.94	.93
Hispanic-American	.70	.76
Any sexualisation	.89	.89
Strong sexualisation	.71	.72
Women infantilized	.81	.85

Results Regarding Quantitative Content Analysis of Magazine Advertisements

In the following section, all research questions and hypotheses results pertaining to the magazine advertisements will be described first, followed by all the results pertaining to the music videos. Time trend analyses were originally proposed to answer Hypotheses 1-3. However, upon further reading (e.g., Pallant, 2011) and consultation with the Statistical Advisory Service, University of Manitoba (Personal communication, 2011), it became evident that this analytical strategy was not appropriate. Time trend regression is only suitable for continuous dependent variables, not categorical (y/n) or ordinal (rank) variables (as are the sexualisation variables in this study). Therefore, it was determined that the best way to address Hypotheses 1-3 was to divide the years 1992-2008 into three separate time periods, namely 1992-1996, 1998- 2002, and 2004-2008. These periods could be compared for differences in proportion using-chi square (Pallant, 2011; personal communication, 2011). It should be noted that any significant differences found between groups cannot be interpreted in terms of "increases" over time but instead in terms of "more and less" (Pallant, 2011). Please also note that some hypotheses wording has been changed since this research was formally proposed to reflect the above statistical changes (i.e., wording in hypotheses pertaining to "increasing" was changed to "larger proportion.")

Descriptive Statistics Concerning Social-demographic Characteristics of Females in Magazine Advertisements

The first section presents descriptive statistics regarding the number and percent (proportion) of females coded of each age group (child, teen, adult) in the total sample and for each time period separately for magazine advertisements.

Age of females in magazine advertisements. Table 4 compares the number and percent of each age group of female in the magazine advertisements for each time period separately and for all years (1992-2008) combined.

As can be seen in Table 4, in Seventeen magazine overall, female children appeared far less often (2%) than teenagers (58%) and adults (40%). From 1992-1996, the proportion of females appearing to be teenagers and adults were similar (e.g., in 1992-1996, 50% of females appeared to be teenagers and 48% of females appeared to be adults) whereas, in later periods (i.e., 1998-2002 and 2004-2008), females were more often presented as teenagers than as adults. In magazine advertisements overall there was a higher proportion of teenagers than adults (i.e., 58% of females were coded as teenagers vs. 40% coded as adults).

Ethnicity of females in magazine advertisements. Table 5 shows the proportion of each ethnic group (in the total sample and by time period) for advertisements. As can be seen in Table 5, females who appeared to be Caucasian and African-American are shown far more predominantly than other ethnicities, regardless of year, in Seventeen magazine ads. Moreover, in the total sample of magazine ads, the vast majority of the females shown (81%) were Caucasian. Note that the 'Other' category refers to ethnicities other than Caucasian, African- American, and Hispanic-American (e.g., First Nations, Asian). As can be seen, the 'Other' category included only small proportions of females (2%).

Presented next are results regarding sexualisation of females in magazine advertisements.

Table 4

Proportion of Females by Time Period and Age in Magazine Advertisements

Period	Child	Teen	Adult	All Ages
1992-1996	2% (13)	50% (293)	48% (278)	586
1998-2002	1% (10)	59% (586)	40% (389)	986
2004-2008	3% (26)	63% (449)	34% (242)	718
All years (1992-2008)	2% (49)	58% (1332)	40% (909)	2290

Table 5

Proportion of Females by Time Period and Ethnicity in Seventeen Magazine Advertisements

Period	Caucasian	African-American	Hispanic-American	Other
1992-1996	86% (505)	10% (59)	2% (10)	2% (10)
1998-2002	79% (779)	16% (162)	3% (26)	2% (18)
2004-2008	78% (562)	16% (114)	3% (18)	3% (24)
All years (1992-2008)	81% (1850)	15% (335)	2% (54)	2% (51)

Descriptive Statistics Concerning Sexualisation of Females in Magazine Advertisements

To recapitulate, the first set of research questions were (a) what proportion of images exhibited "any" sexualisation, (b) for sexualised images, what proportion exhibited strong sexualisation, and (c) for sexualised images, what proportion of adult females were portrayed in ways that sexualize girls. These calculations were made for both the total sample and for each time period separately.

Proportion of any sexualisation of females in magazine ads. Table 6 shows the calculations of any sexualisation and strong sexualisation for magazine advertisements by period. The proportion of sexualisation was calculated for each age group (child, teenager, adult). Overall (1992-2008) in Seventeen magazine ads, female children were sexualised less often (24%) than were teenagers (64%) and adults (73%). Note, these percentages are calculated within each cell (e.g., the percentage of all child images that were sexualised child images). In the total sample, 68% of females (*n*=1565) of females were sexualised to some degree but not strongly. Table 6 shows that this phenomenon ranged from 56% in 1992-1996 to 78% in 2004-2008. As can be seen in Table 6, between two-thirds and three-quarters of all images were similarly sexualised and the proportion was higher in each successive time period.

Proportion of strong sexualisation in magazine advertisements. No female children were strongly sexualised in Seventeen magazine advertisements. Overall, 4% of teens were strongly sexualised and 7% of adults were strongly sexualised. The proportion of teens strongly sexualised ranged from <1% in 1992-1996 to 8% in 2004-2008. The proportion of strongly sexualised adults ranged from 5% in 1992-1996 to 13% in 2004-2008. The latest time period contained the highest proportion of strongly sexualised ads for both teens and adults. Overall, 5% (*n* = 110) of females (any age) were strongly sexualised. Table 6 shows that the proportion of

Table 6

Proportion of Sexualised Females by Age and Time Period in Magazine Advertisements

Age	Time Period			
	1992-1996	1998-2002	2004-2008	All Years
Child				
Any	0% (0)	10% (1)	44% (11)	24% (12)
Strong	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Teenagers				
Any	44% (129)	61% (361)	80% (361)	64% (851)
Strong	<1% (1)	3% (15)	8% (32)	4% (48)
Adults				
Any	77% (300)	77% (214)	78% (188)	77% (702)
Strong	5% (20)	4% (10)	13% (32)	7% (62)
All Ages				
Any	56% (343)	67% (662)	78% (561)	68% (1565)
Strong	2% (11)	4% (35)	9% (64)	5% (116)

ads that contained females (any age) that were strongly sexualized from 2% in 1992-1996 to 9% in 2004-2008.

Proportion of infantilized women in magazine advertisements. Sixteen (2%) of the 909 adult images infantilized women. This ranged from 1% (four) in 1992-1996 to <1% (one) in 1998-2002 to 5% (11) in 2004-2008. Thus, regardless of time period, adult females in magazines ads were infrequently infantilized, ranging from 1-5% per time period. Despite being relatively infrequent, the percentage increased fivefold in the latest time period.

Results Regarding Hypotheses Concerning Sexualisation of Females in Magazine Advertisements.

The results regarding hypothesis testing will be described next. Table 6 provides the proportion and total number of sexualised females by age and time period. For the following hypotheses, chi-square tests were conducted to determine if the observed differences in proportion of sexualised females (in each group across periods) were significant. If so, follow-up tests were performed to see which time periods specifically were different.

Data Management

The data did not violate the statistical test assumptions for chi-square (i.e., assumptions of nominal or ordinal variables; variables consisting of two or more categories of independent groups; all observations occur only in one cell; and an adequate sample size with at least twenty observations used distributed across at least five members of each category). In cases in which the *n* for a comparison age group was small enough to violate statistical assumptions for chi-square tests (i.e., did not meet the minimum *n* cell requirements of at least 20 observations with five cases per comparison group), the Fishers Exact Test was used instead (Pallant, 2011). In

cases for which cell sizes were too small to provide for a valid comparison (i.e., in certain cases for children and Hispanic-American females) these groups were excluded from the analyses.

Hypothesis 1(a): A larger proportion of sexualised female images will be contained in magazine advertisements published in recent years than in earlier years.

To answer Hypothesis 1(a), chi-square tests were conducted to determine if the observed differences in proportion of sexualised females in each age group across time periods were significant. The results of these chi-square tests are presented in Table 7.

As can be seen in Table 7, the Fishers Exact Test on children indicated that ads during the 2004-2008 period were significantly more sexualised than the 1992-1996 period at $p<.01$, but the other periods were not significantly different. The overall chi-square test for teens was significant at $p<.001$. Follow up tests indicated that each period was significantly different, with the proportion of sexualized ads higher in each successive period. The overall chi-square test for adult females was not significant. The results of the overall chi-square test on all ages of females combined was significant, at $p<.001$. Follow-up tests indicated that each of the periods were significantly different with the proportion of sexualised ads higher in each successive period. Thus, Hypothesis 1(a) was generally supported, but not for adults.

Some research has found that ethnic minority representation has been increasing in at least some media (e.g., Greenberg & Brand, 1994). As African-American and Hispanic-American females may be sexualised more often (APA, 2007), any overall positive trend toward

Table 7

Chi-Square Tests Comparing Proportion of Sexualised Females by Age and Time Period in Magazine Advertisements

Age	Periods Compared	X^2	DF
Children			
	1 vs. 2	(Fishers) *p* = NS	n = 23
	2 vs. 3	(Fishers) *p* = NS	n = 36
	1 vs. 3	(Fishers) *p* = **	n = 39
Teenagers	overall chi-square	103.32***	2, 1332
	1 vs. 2	23.98***	1, 879
	2 vs. 3	42.19***	1, 1035
	1 vs. 3	103.12***	1, 742
Adults	overall chi-square	0.41, *p* = NS	2, 909
All Ages	overall chi-square	58.65 ***	2, 2290
	1 vs. 2	11.52**	1, 1472
	2 vs. 3	25.21***	1, 1704
	1 vs. 3	58.30***	1, 1304

Notes. Period 1= 1992-1996; Period 2 = 1998-2002; Period 3 = 2004-2008.

*** = <.001, **= <.01, * = <. 05

increasing sexualisation may be due to increased representation of ethnic minorities. To rule this out, differences in proportion of sexualisation across time periods for all ethnicities together, as well as for (a) Caucasian and (b) African-American females separately, were calculated to see if sexualisation would be higher in each successive period. Please note that there were not sufficient cell sizes (i.e., very low *n*) to analyze Hispanic-American females separately, so Hispanic-American females were excluded from these analyses.

Table 8 presents the differences in proportion of Caucasian and African-American females sexualised in magazine ads by age and time period. Table 8 shows a generally similar pattern of results for both Caucasian and African-American females, especially teenagers. The proportion of females who were sexualised was higher in more recent periods than in previous periods for teenagers and all ages of females combined.

The results of the chi-square tests of differences in proportion of sexualised females in each group across periods are found in Table 9. African-American children and Hispanic-American females of all ages were excluded from the analyses due to insufficient cell sizes. The results do not indicate that the significant increases in proportion of sexualised images found in magazine ads were due to an increase in representation of females who are African-American. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the results from examining Caucasian images separately were the same as the results from all ethnicities combined in Table 7. This is hardly surprising given the relatively few minority images in the overall sample. Both Caucasian and African-American females (teens, all ages) are portrayed in ways that are sexualised more often in recent years (e.g., 2004-2008) than in previous years (e.g., 1992-1996).

Table 8

Proportions of Sexualised Females by Ethnicity, Time Period, and Age in Magazine Advertisements

Ethnicity	Age	Period			
		1992-1996	1998-2002	2004-2008	All Years
Caucasian					
	Children	0% (0)	17% (1)	58% (7)	24% (8)
	Teenagers	40% (142)	64% (298)	80% (292)	68% (732)
	Adults	78% (199)	82% (250)	78% (142)	80% (591)
	All Ages	60% (206)	70% (549)	79% (444)	70% (1199)
African-American					
	Children	0% (0)	0% (0)	50% (2)	50% (2)
	Teenagers	50% (17)	54% (42)	84% (54)	63% (113)
	Adults	63% (15)	61% (43)	80% (37)	68% (95)
	All Ages	54% (27)	57% (93)	82% (93)	64% (213)

Table 9

Chi-Square Tests Comparing Proportion of Sexualised Females by Age, Ethnicity, and Time Period in Magazine Advertisements

Ethnicity	Age	Periods Compared	X^2	DF
Caucasian				
	Children			
		1 vs. 2	(Fishers) *p* = NS	n= 16
		2 vs. 3	(Fishers) *p* = NS	n= 23
		1 vs. 3	(Fishers)**	n= 27
	Teenagers	overall chi-square	90.02***	2, 1073
		1 vs. 2	26.72***	1, 829
		2 vs. 3	29.04***	1, 710
		1 vs. 3	90.49***	1, 607
	Adults	overall chi-square	1.05, *p* = NS	2, 739
	All Ages	overall chi-square	48.29***	2, 2290
		1 vs. 2	12.81***	1, 1340
		2 vs. 3	15.96***	1, 1287
		1 vs. 3	48.01***	1, 1071
African-American				
	Teenagers	overall chi-square	18.07***	2, 190
		1 vs. 2	15.31***	1, 156
		2 vs. 3	0.19, *p* = NS	1, 92
		1 vs. 3	13.15***	1, 98
	Adults	overall chi-square	4.98, *p* = NS	2, 140
	All Ages	overall chi-square	20.90***	2, 335
		1 vs. 2	17.79***	1, 276
		2 vs. 3	0.18, *p* = NS	1, 221
		1 vs. 3	14.50***	1, 173

Notes. Period 1= 1992-1996; Period 2 = 1998-2002; Period 3= 2004-2008.
*** = <.001, ** = <.01 * = < .05.

Hypothesis 2(a): A larger proportion of strongly sexualised female images will be contained in magazine advertisements published in recent years than in earlier years.

To answer hypothesis 2(a), chi-square tests were computed to determine if the observed differences in proportion of strongly sexualised females in each age group across time periods were significant. Recall that Table 6 showed the proportion of females strongly sexualised by age and time period. Also recall that no children were strongly sexualised. Table 10 shows the results of the chi-square tests comparing proportion of females in magazine advertisements depicting strong sexualisation. The result of the overall chi-square test on teenagers was significant. Follow-up tests indicated that the time periods were significantly different from each other, with the proportion of strong sexualisation higher in each successive period.

Continuing with Table 10, the overall chi-square test on adults was significant at $p<.001$. Follow-up tests indicated that two of the three time period comparisons were significantl, with the proportion of strongly sexualised ads increasing over time. The exceptions were the earlier periods 1992-1996 and 1998-2002, which were not significantly different from each other.

As can be seen in Table 10, the results of the overall chi-square test on all ages of females combined was significant at $p<.001$. Follow-up tests indicated that each of the groups were significantly different from each other, with the proportion of strongly sexualised ads increasing over time.

Thus, Hypothesis 2a was mostly supported.

Separate chi-square analyses were also conducted for Caucasian and African-American females (for each age group separately and all ages combined). The purpose was to determine if a lower proportion of strong sexualisation was present in the 1992-1996 period and a higher

Table 10

Chi-Square Tests Comparing Proportion of Strongly Sexualised Females by Age and Time Period in Magazine Advertisements

Age	Periods Compared	X^2	DF
Teenagers	overall chi-square	31.40***	1332, 2
	1 vs. 2	5.38*	879, 1
	2 vs. 3	15.15 ***	1035, 1
	1 vs. 3	21.33***	742, 1
Adults	overall chi-square	20.22***	909, 2
	1 vs. 2	0.99, *p* = NS	631, 1
	2 vs. 3	11.81***	667, 1
	1 vs. 3	15.12***	520, 1
All Ages	overall chi-square	45.30***	2290, 2
	1 vs. 2	24.68***	1602, 1
	2 vs. 3	24.68***	1704, 1
	1 vs. 3	31.88***	1304, 1

Notes. Period 1= 1992-1996; Period 2 = 1998-2002; Period 3 = 2004-2008.

*** = <.001, **= < .01, *= < .05.

proportion of strong sexualisation was present in the 2004-2008 period for each ethnicity. Recall that no Hispanic-American females were strongly sexualised and no children of any ethnicity were strongly sexualised, so they are excluded from these analyses. Table 11 shows the proportion of females of each ethnicity who are strongly sexualised by period. As can be seen from Table 11, similar patterns in the proportion of strong sexualisation were found across time periods for Caucasian and African-American teenagers, adults, and both ages combined. Specifically, a higher proportion of each group was strongly sexualised in recent years (2004-2008) than in earlier years (1992-1996).

Table 12 shows the results of the chi-squares testing the significance of differences in proportion of strong sexualisation by time period for some Caucasian and African-American females. No children or Hispanic-American females were strongly sexualised, so no analyses were run for these groups. Separate tests comparing the differences in African-American teenagers and adults were also excluded due to insufficient cell sizes (i.e., very small *n*). The power of these tests was so low that they did not present a valid test of the hypotheses. Thus, only tests comparing African-American teenagers and adults combined were analyzed.

As can be seen from Table 12, for Caucasian teenagers, all periods were significantly different, with the lowest proportion of strong sexualisation in the 1992-1996 period and the highest proportion in the 2004-2008 period. For Caucasian adults, as well as for teens and adults combined, the same pattern was found, except that the 1992-1996 and 1998-2002 were not significantly different. For African-American teens and adults combined, the same pattern was found as for Caucasian teens and adults combined.

Table 11

Proportions of Strongly Sexualised Females by Time Period, Ethnicity, and Age in Magazine Ads

Ethnicity	Age	Period			
		1992-1996	1998-2002	2004-2008	All Years
Caucasian					
	Teenagers	<1% (1)	3% (15)	7% (27)	4% (43)
	Adults	4% (10)	5% (14)	13% (24)	7% (48)
	Teenagers and Adults	2% (11)	4% (29)	9% (51)	5% (91)
African-American					
	Teenagers	0% (0)	0% (0)	8% (5)	3% (5)
	Adults	0% (0)	9% (6)	15% (7)	8% (13)
	Teenagers and Adults	0% (0)	4% (6)	11% (12)	5% (18)

Notes. No children of any ethnicity were strongly sexualised.

No Hispanic-American females of any age were strongly sexualised.

Table 12

Chi-Square Tests Comparing Proportion of Strongly Sexualised Females by Ethnicity, Age, and Time Period in Magazine Advertisements

Ethnicity	Age	Time Periods Compared	X^2	DF
Caucasian				
	Teenagers	overall chi-square	24.23***	1073, 2
		1 vs. 2	10.12***	829, 1
		2 vs. 3	5.74*	710, 1
		1 vs. 3	18.58***	607, 1
	Adults	overall chi-square	16.31***	739, 2
		1 vs. 2	0.14, *p* = NS	558, 1
		2 vs. 3	10.72***	487, 1
		1 vs. 3	11.51***	433, 1
	Teenagers and Adults	overall chi-square	35.33 ***	1853, 2
		1 vs. 2	2.47, *p* = NS	1287, 1
		2 vs. 3	19.16***	1345, 1
		1 vs. 3	25.61***	1074, 1
African-American				
	Teenagers and Adults	overall chi-square	9.90**	331, 2
		1 vs. 2	2.20, *p* = NS	217, 1
		2 vs. 3	4.98*	274, 1
		1 vs. 3	6.45**	171, 1

Notes. Period 1 = 1992-1996 Period 2 = 1998-2002 Period 3 = 2004 -2008

*** = <.001, **= < .01, *= <.05.

Children and Hispanic-American females of any age were excluded from these analyses due to insufficient cell sizes.

Hypothesis 3(a): A larger proportion of the media images of African-American and Hispanic-American females will be sexualised than images of Caucasian females in the total sample of magazine ads.

To test hypothesis 3(a), chi-square analyses were conducted to see if there were significant differences in sexualisation of the images of Caucasian vs. African-American females. Table 13 presents the frequency and proportions of any sexualisation in magazine ads by age, ethnicity, and strength of sexualisation. As indicated above, Hispanic-American females of all ages, as well as children, were excluded due to insufficient cell sizes. Sixty-four percent of both Caucasian and African-American teenagers were sexualised. More Caucasian adults (80%) were sexualised than were African-American adults (68%). As can be seen in Table 13, a similar proportion of Caucasian teens and adults combined and African-American teens and adults combined were sexualized (e.g., 70% of Caucasian females vs. 65% of African-American females.

No specific hypotheses were made about strong sexualisation by ethnic group. However, descriptive statistics regarding strong sexualisation by ethnic group is provided in Table 13 to show the prevalence of strong sexualisation in the sample. An identical proportion (5%) of Caucasian teenagers and adults combined, and African-American teenagers and adults combined, were strongly sexualised. As stated previously, none of the small sample of Hispanic-American females were strongly sexualised.

Chi-square tests of differences in proportion of sexualisation by ethnicity. The results of the chi-square tests of differences in proportion of sexualisation between Caucasian and

Table 13

Proportion of Sexualised Females by Age, Ethnicity, Age, and Strength of Sexualisation in Magazine Advertisements

Ethnicity	Age	Level of Sexualisation	
Caucasian		Any	Strong
	Teenagers	64% (693)	4% (46)
	Adults	80% (591)	6% (47)
	Teenagers and Adults	70% (1284)	5% (93)
African-American			
	Teenagers	64% (121)	3% (5)
	Adults	68% (95)	9% (13)
	Teenagers and Adults	65% (216)	5% (18)

African-American females are presented in Table 14. As can be seen in Table 14, Caucasian adults were more likely to be sexualised than African-American adults. No differences were observed for teenagers alone or for teenagers and adults combined.

In conclusion, Hypothesis 3(a) was not supported.

Descriptive Statistics Concerning Socio-demographic Characteristics of Females in Music Videos

Age of female in music videos. Table 15 compares the number and percent of each age group of females appearing in the total sample of music videos, for each time period separately and for all years (1992-2008) combined. As can be seen in Table 15, in music videos, overall children appeared less often (5%) than teenagers (17%) and adults (79%), regardless of year. In all periods, females who appeared to be adults were presented far more often than were females who appeared to be teenagers. For example, in 2004-2008, 78% of females appeared to be adults, compared to 20% who appeared to be teenagers.

Ethnicity of females in music videos. Table 16 provides the ethnicity of females by time period. Table16 shows that Caucasian and African-American females were shown far more predominantly in music videos than were other ethnicities, regardless of year. In music videos, the proportion of females in 1992-1996 appearing Caucasian (48%) and African-American (46%) were similar. In the later periods, there was a greater proportion of African-American than Caucasian females.

Table 16 shows that the number of females in music videos spiked in 1998-2002. It is noteworthy that there were more videos nominated overall in those years than in other years. This is due, in part, to fewer videos being nominated in multiple categories, thereby increasing

Table 14

Chi-Square Tests Comparing Proportion of Sexualised Females by Ethnicity in Magazine Advertisements

Age	Ethnicity	X^2	DF
Teenagers			
	Caucasian vs. African-American	1.32, *p* = NS	1305, 1
Adults			
	Caucasian vs. African-American	9.88**	880, 1
Teenagers and Adults			
	Caucasian vs. African-American	3.23, *p* = NS	2185, 1

Notes: Period 1= 1992-1996; Period 2 = 1998-2002; Period 3 = 2004-2008.

*** = <.001, **= < .01, *= < .05.

Table 15

Proportion of Females by Time Period and Age in Music Videos

Period	Child	Teen	Adult	All Ages
1992-1996	8% (61)	15% (109)	77% (557)	727
1998-2002	6% (78)	14% (201)	80% (1121)	1400
2004-2008	1% (13)	20% (224)	78% (864)	1101
All years (1992-2008)	5% (152)	17% (534)	79% (2642)	3228

Table 16

Proportion of Females by Time Period and Ethnicity in Music Videos

Period	Caucasian	African-American	Hispanic-American	Other
1992-1996	48% (346)	46% (331)	2% (14)	5% (36)
1998-2002	46% (641)	47% (658)	3% (41)	3% (60)
2004-2008	30% (322)	58% (645)	5% (58)	7% (76)
All years (1992-2008)	41% (1309)	51% (1634)	4% (113)	5% (172)

the total number of nominated videos during this time period. It is unknown why, in 1998-2002, fewer videos were nominated in multiple categories.

Table 16 also shows that the ethnic proportions shifted in 2004-2008, reflecting a sharp decrease in Caucasian females in videos without a corresponding increase in African-American females. This may be in part due to increased numbers of hip-hop and rap genre videos being nominated for awards across categories. Consistent with this trend, the winning MTV music video award nominees during this period were increasingly of the hip-hop and rap genres. In U.S. music, such genres currently make up a "notable proportion" of music videos and typically feature African-American artists and characters (Ward, 2013).

Descriptive Statistics Concerning Sexualisation of Females in Music Videos

Proportion of Any Sexualisation of Females in Music Videos. Table 17 shows the proportion of sexualised females by time period in music videos. It was found that, in the total sample of music videos, 68% of females (all ages) were sexualised. The proportion of females (all ages) who were sexualised ranged from 48% in 1992-1996 to 87% in 2004-2008. The proportion of sexualised females was also calculated by age group (child, teenager, adult). Overall, in the total sample, children (13%) were less likely to be sexualised than teens (53%) and adults (73%) in music videos. For children, the proportion of sexualisation ranged from 7% in 1992-1996 to 31% in 2004-2008. For teens, the proportion of sexualisation ranged from 20% in 1992-1996 to 80% in 2004-2008. In contrast, for adults the proportion sexualised was more similar across year groups, ranging from 58% to 89%. Table 17 shows that adults generally were more often sexualised than were teenagers, regardless of period. However, the gap decreased over time (i.e., in 1992-1996, 20% of teenagers versus 58% of adults where sexualised, whereas in 2004-2008, 80% of teenagers were sexualised vs. 89% of adults).

Table 17

Proportion of Sexualised Females by Age and Time Period in Music Videos

Age	Time Period			
	1992-1996	1998-2002	2004-2008	All Years
Child				
Any	7% (4)	15% (12)	31% (4)	13% (20)
Strong	0% (0)	8% (6)	0% (0)	3% (6)
Teenagers				
Any	20% (22)	59% (118)	80% (184)	53% (324)
Strong	4% (4)	5% (11)	21% (48)	10% (63)
Adults				
Any	58% (325)	68% (761)	89% (769)	73% (1855)
Strong	17% (91)	32% (354)	58% (505)	36% (950)
All Ages				
Any	48% (351)	64% (891)	87% (957)	68% (2199)
Strong	13% (95)	27% (371)	50% (553)	30% (1019)

For all age groups, the percentage of females who were portrayed in a sexualised manner was progressively higher across periods. In addition, the proportion of sexualised females (among both teens and adults) reached 80% or above in the most recent period.

Proportion of strong sexualisation in music videos. Table 17 shows that children were rarely strongly sexualised, regardless of year, in music videos. For teenagers, the proportion strongly sexualised ranged from 4% in 1992-1996 to 21% in 2004-2008. For adults, the proportion strongly sexualised ranged from 17% to 58%. Table 17 shows that, overall, 30% of females (any age) were strongly sexualised. This proportion ranged from 13% in 1992-1996 to 50% in 2004-2008. Thus, the proportion became higher across periods among teens and adults, peaking in the most recent period. For adults, it was well over half (58%) in 2004-2008.

Proportion of infantilized women in music videos. Regardless of period, adults in music videos were infrequently infantilized, ranging from <1-3%. Overall, 2% (n = 55) of the total sample of adult females were infantilized.

Results Regarding Hypotheses Concerning Sexualisation of Females in Music Videos

Now the results regarding hypothesis testing will be described.

Hypothesis 1(b)*: A larger proportion of sexualised female images will be contained in music videos published in recent years than in earlier years.*

To test Hypothesis 1(b), chi-square tests were conducted to determine if the observed differences in proportion of sexualised females in each group across periods were significant. These chi-square results are presented in Table 18. Children have been excluded from the table due to insufficient cell sizes.

Table 18

Chi-Square Tests Comparing Proportion of Sexualised Females by Age and Time Period in Music Videos

Age	Time Periods Compared	X^2	DF
Teenagers	overall chi-square	118.59***	534, 2
	1 vs. 2	43.40 ***	310, 1
	2 vs. 3	27.24***	425, 1
	1 vs. 3	119.31***	333, 1
Adults	overall chi-square	189.03***	2542, 2
	1 vs. 2	5.21*	1957, 1
	2 vs. 3	174.05***	1658, 1
	1 vs. 3	114.76***	2222, 1
All Ages	overall chi-square	325.33***	3228, 2
	1 vs. 2	47.75***	2127, 1
	2 vs. 3	172.21***	2501, 1
	1 vs. 3	323.11***	1828, 1

Notes: Period 1= 1992-1996; Period 2 = 1998-2002; Period 3 = 2004-2008.

*** = <.001, **= <.01, * = < .05.

As can be seen from Table 18, the results of the overall chi-square test on teenagers, adults, and all ages (combined) was significant. In addition, follow-up tests indicated that each of the periods were significant from each other, with the proportion of sexualised music videos higher in each successive time period. Thus, hypothesis 1(b) was supported.

In addition to determining if there were differences for the total sample, chi-square tests were also computed for Caucasian and African-American females. Due to insufficient cell sizes, Hispanic-American females were excluded from the analysis.

Table 19 shows the proportion of females of each ethnicity who were sexualised by time period. It shows that the proportion of sexualised children, teenagers, adults, and all ages combined higher across periods for both Caucasian and African-American females, with the most recent period (2004-2008) containing the highest proportion of sexualised females in every group.

Table 20 shows the results of the chi-square analyses testing the significance of differences in proportion of sexualisation by ethnicity, age, and time period. As indicated above, due to the fact that Hispanic-American cell sizes were insufficient to validly tests the hypothesis, they were excluded. For this same reason, children were also excluded from the analyses. Table 20 shows that the proportion of sexualised Caucasian and African-American teenagers differed significantly across periods, with the most recent period (2004-2008) containing the highest proportion of sexualized females. The proportion of sexualised Caucasian adults differed significantly across all time periods, with 1992-1996 period having the lowest and 2004-2008 having the highest proportion of sexualisation. For African-American adults, the same pattern was found, except that the two earliest periods did not differ.

Table 19

Proportion of Sexualised Females by Ethnicity, Age, and Time Period in Music Videos

Ethnicity	Age	Period			
		1992-1996	1998-2002	2004-2008	All Years
Caucasian					
	Children	6% (3)	14% (6)	40% (2)	20% (11)
	Teenagers	19% (10)	53% (64)	76% (79)	49% (153)
	Adults	38% (94)	54% (257)	72% (154)	55% (505)
	All Ages	31% (107)	51% (327)	75% (235)	52% (669)
African-American					
	Children	0% (0)	16% (5)	25% (2)	14% (8)
	Teenagers	22% (10)	78% (47)	96% (89)	65% (146)
	Adults	78% (214)	80% (452)	96% (522)	85% (1188)
	All Ages	67% (224)	77% (504)	95% (613)	80% (134)

Table 20

Chi-Square Tests Comparing Proportion of Sexualised Females by Ethnicity, Age, and Time Period in Music Videos

Ethnicity	Age of Female	Time Periods Compared	X^2	DF
Caucasian				
	Teenagers	overall chi-square	46.59***	277, 2
		1 vs. 2	17.84 ***	173, 1
		2 vs. 3	12.36***	224, 1
		1 vs. 3	46.61***	157, 1
	Adults	overall chi-square	55.22***	939, 2
		1 vs. 2	16.71***	726, 1
		2 vs. 3	21.26***	692, 1
		1 vs. 3	55.22***	460, 1
	Teenagers and Adults	overall chi-square	119.68***	1309, 2
		1 vs. 2	37.90***	987, 1
		2 vs. 3	42.56***	963, 1
		1 vs. 3	119.68***	668, 1
African-American				
	Teenagers	overall chi-square	88.26***	197, 2
		1 vs. 2	32.62***	105, 1
		2 vs. 3	13.06***	152, 1
		1 vs. 3	83.72***	137, 1
	Adults	overall chi-square	76.25***	1388, 2
		1 vs. 2	0.53, *p* = NS	843, 1
		2 vs. 3	65.96***	1112, 1
		1 vs. 3	65.70***	821, 1
	Teenagers and Adults	overall chi-square	133.73***	1634, 2
		1 vs. 2	9.02**	989, 1
		2 vs. 3	90.54***	1303, 1
		1 vs. 3	134.12***	976, 1

Notes. Period 1 = 1992-1996; Period 2 = 1998-2002; Period 3 = 2004-2008
*** = <.001, **= <.01 * = <.05.

Lastly, as can be seen in Table 20, for both Caucasian and African-American females, all periods were significantly different from each other, for teenagers and adults combined, with the lowest proportion in the 1992-1996 period and the highest proportion in the 2004-2008 period.

Hypothesis 2(b): A larger proportion of strongly sexualised females will be contained in music videos published in recent years than in earlier years.

To test hypothesis 2(b), chi-square analyses were conducted to determine if the observed differences in proportion of strongly sexualised females in each age group across periods were significant. Children were once again excluded from these analyses. Recall that Table 17 shows the proportion of strong sexualisation for each age group across periods. As can be seen in Table 17, the proportion of females who were strongly sexualised was higher in each successive time period. When looking at the age groups individually, the proportion of both teenage and adult females who were strongly sexualised exhibited this same pattern.

Table 21 shows the results of the chi-square tests comparing proportion of strongly sexualised females in music videos. The overall chi-square on teenagers was significant at $p<.001$. Follow-up tests indicated that the most recent time period (2004-2008) contained significantly more strongly sexualised teenagers than earlier periods, which did not differ significantly. The results of the overall chi-square test for adults, as well as for teenagers and adults combined, were significant at $p<.001$. Moreover, follow-up tests indicated that all periods were significantly different from each other, with the proportion of sexualised females higher over time. Thus, Hypothesis 2(b) was largely supported.

Proportions were also calculated for Caucasian females and African-American (teenagers, adults, and both groups combined). Table 22 shows the proportion by time period for each ethnic group. Hispanic-American females were again excluded due to insufficient cell sizes.

Table 21

Chi-Square Tests Comparing Proportion of Strongly Sexualised Females by Age in Music Videos

Age	Time Periods Compared	X^2	DF
Teenagers	overall chi-square	34.61***	534, 2
	1 vs. 2	0.50, *p* = NS	310, 1
	2 vs. 3	22.56***	425, 1
	1 vs. 3	17.55***	333, 1
Adults	overall chi-square	274.75***	2542, 2
	1 vs. 2	137.03***	1121, 1
	2 vs. 3	43.52***	1678, 1
	1 vs. 3	238.55***	1421, 1
Teenagers and Adults	overall chi-square	299.03***	3228, 2
	1 vs. 2	256.68***	1828, 1
	2 vs. 3	142.89***	2501, 1
	1 vs. 3	49.63***	2127, 1

Notes. Period 1 = 1992-1996; Period 2 = 1998-2002; Period 3 = 2004-2008.

*** = <.001, **= <.01, * <= .05.

Table 22

Proportion of Strongly Sexualised Females by Time Period, Ethnicity, and Age in Music Videos

Ethnicity	Age	Period			
		1992-1996	1998-2002	2004-2008	All Years
Caucasian					
	Teenagers	4% (2)	5% (6)	10% (10)	5% (18)
	Adults	8% (20)	20% (96)	44% (94)	24% (210)
	Teenagers and Adults	6% (22)	17% (102)	31% (104)	18% (228)
African-American					
	Teenagers	4% (2)	8% (5)	40% (37)	17% (44)
	Adults	24% (67)	42% (240)	67% (363)	44% (670)
	Teenagers and Adults	21% (69)	38% (245)	62% (400)	40% (714)

Note. Children and Hispanic-American females have been excluded due to insufficient cell sizes.

As can be seen in Table 22, similar patterns of progressively higher sexualisation across periods were found for both Caucasian and African-American females, in both age groups. Specifically, a much higher proportion of females were strongly sexualised in 2004-2008 than in earlier periods, especially 1992-1996.

Table 23 shows the results of the chi-squares testing the significance of the differences in proportion found in Table 22. As can be seen in Table 23, there was a different pattern for African-American and Caucasian teenagers. For Caucasian teenagers, there was no significant difference in the proportion of strong sexualisation across periods (partially due to small cell sizes) whereas, for African-American teenagers, the 2004-2008 time period contained a significantly higher proportion of strong sexualisation than either of the earlier periods.
As can also be seen in Table 23, there was a significantly higher proportion of strong sexualisation in more recent years (e.g., 2004-2008) than in the two earlier periods, for both African-American and Caucasian females (adults, teenagers and adults combined).

Hypothesis 3(b): A larger proportion of media images of African-American and Hispanic-American females will be sexualised than images of Caucasian females in the total sample of music videos.

Table 24 shows of the proportion of sexualised females by ethnicity and age in music videos, across all periods. Children and Hispanic-American teenagers were excluded due to insufficient cell sizes. As can be seen in Table 24, African-American females were more often sexualised (any sexualisation) than were Caucasian females (i.e., 82% vs. 51%, respectively). Although a specific hypothesis about strong sexualisation by ethnic group was not made, relevant data are presented in this table to show the prevalence of strong sexualisation in music

Table 23

Chi-Square Tests Comparing Proportion of Strongly Sexualised Females by Ethnicity, Age, and Time Period in Music Videos

Ethnicity	Age	Time Periods Compared	X^2	DF
Caucasian				
	Teenagers	overall chi-square	2.75, *p* = NS	277, 2
	Adults	overall chi-square	86.38***	939, 1
		1 vs. 2	17.32***	726, 1
		2 vs. 3	41.43***	692, 1
		1 vs. 3	78.06***	460, 1
	Teenagers and Adults	overall chi-square	76.45***	1309, 2
		1 vs. 2	20.63***	987, 1
		2 vs. 3	30.11***	963, 1
		1 vs. 3	72.02***	668, 1
African-American				
	Teenagers	overall chi-square	32.04 ***	197, 2
		1 vs. 2	0.63, *p* = NS	105, 1
		2 vs. 3	18.46 ***	152, 1
		1 vs. 3	18.99 ***	137, 1
	Adults	overall chi-square	138.82***	1388, 2
		1 vs. 2	26.49***	843, 1
		2 vs. 3	61.22***	1112, 1
		1 vs. 3	127.09 ***	821, 1
	Teenagers and Adults	overall chi-square	161.89***	1634, 2
		1 vs. 2	28.55***	989, 1
		2 vs. 3	73.25***	1303, 1
		1 vs. 3	144.17***	976, 1

Notes. Period 1= 1992-1996; Period 2 = 1998-2002; Period 3 = 2004-2008.

*** = <.001, **= <.01 * = <.05.

Table 24

Proportion of Sexualised Females by Ethnicity, Age, and Strength of Sexualisation in Music Videos

Ethnicity	Age	Level of Sexualisation Coded	
Caucasian		Any	Strong
	Teenagers	55% (153)	5% (18)
	Adults	54% (505)	22% (210)
	Teenagers and Adults	51% (658)	18% (228)
African-American			
	Teenagers	74% (146)	22% (44)
	Adults	86% (1188)	48% (670)
	Teenagers and Adults	82% (1334)	44% (714)
Hispanic-American			
	Teenagers	50% (12)	<1% (1)
	Adults	82% (71)	44% (38)
	Teenagers and Adults	73% (83)	35% (39)

Notes. Raw number for Hispanic teenagers are included in the table for completeness of column totals, but were not analyzed due to insufficient cell sizes.

videos. As can be seen, African-American females were more often portrayed as strongly sexualised than were Caucasian females (i.e., 44% vs. 18%, respectively).

Chi-Square tests of differences in proportion of sexualisation by ethnicity. Table 25 shows the chi-square results regarding of the differences in the proportion of sexualised females by age and ethnic group in music videos. Children and Hispanic-American teenagers were excluded due to insufficient cell sizes. Table 25 shows that a higher proportion of African-American teenagers depicted sexualisation than did Caucasian teenagers. African-American and Hispanic-American adults were more often sexualised than were Caucasian adults ($p<.001$). For teenagers and adults, a higher proportion of both African-American and Hispanic-American females depicted sexualisation than did Caucasian females ($p<.001$). Therefore, hypothesis 3(b) was supported.

Study 2: Focus Groups

Research Questions

The second, qualitative set of research questions concerns how girls (here defined as females in grade 6-12) "read" messages about sexualisation of girls in music videos and advertisements. What meaning do girls make of sexualised media images of them? How do they understand sexualised images and messages about girls? How are they influenced by such sexualised media images and messages? That is, what are their opinions of, and experiences with, media sexualisation of girls? For example, do they model themselves after sexualised images? How much do girls feel pressured by media images to change? Lastly, do girls at different stages of adolescence (e.g., grade 6 vs. grade 12) respond differently to sexualised media images of them?

Table 25

Chi-Square Tests Comparing Proportion of Sexualised Females by Age and Ethnicity in Music Videos

Age	Ethnicity	X^2	DF
Teenagers	Caucasian vs. African-American	17.66***	474, 1
Adults	Caucasian vs. African-American	287.55***	2327, 1
	Caucasian vs. Hispanic-American	25.22***	1026, 1
Teenagers and Adults	Caucasian vs. African-American	323.16***	2943, 1
	Caucasian vs. Hispanic-American	22.67***	1422, 1

Notes: *** = <.001 **= <.01 * = <.05.

These questions were addressed via focus groups conducted with girls in grade 6, 9, and 12 who viewed and discussed sexualised media images of girls. The focus groups provided evidence regarding how girls construct meaning from sexualised media and decode sexualised media messages. It also evidences girls' thoughts and feelings about being targeted by sexualised media, as well as how much and in what ways girls think it influences them. The focus group results supply evidence regarding how adolescent girls react to being targeted by sexualised images of girls, such as those found in music videos and Seventeen magazines (i.e., the sexualised images of girls documented in the quantitative content analysis).

Methodology

Justification of Choice to Use Focus Groups

Focus groups are a research method that gathers data via group interaction on a topic (Carson, Gillmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001). Within focus groups, participants exchange and expand on ideas and highlight topics of importance. A unique feature of focus groups is their ability to reveal complex behaviours and motivations resulting from group dynamics. In focus groups, the interaction between group members and the construction of meaning is emphasized (Bryman, 2004; Kreuger & Casey, 2000). Further, focus groups are useful when the purpose of the research is to investigate a target group's ideas or feelings about something. They are also useful when trying to understand potential differences in perspective between groups of people and/or when the goal is to uncover as yet unknown factors that influence people's opinions or behaviors. Focus groups can provide insight into the attitudes of individuals about complicated topics. They are especially useful when you want ideas to emerge from the group (Krueger & Kasey, 2009)

Tiggemann, Gardiner, and Slater (2000) state that focus groups can be particularly beneficial with adolescents, for several reasons. First, because participants talk to each other as opposed to the researcher, focus groups are particularly insightful regarding the cultural values of adolescents, who often use terminology and communication styles different from adults. Second, focus groups reveal the interaction among participants as they question and explain themselves to each other. This makes focus groups useful for understanding abstract concepts related to sense of self and identity with adolescents. Even if these concepts are well-established in the minds of most adolescents, they may not have undergone much conscious cognitive processing and verbalization. Therefore, affording adolescents the opportunity to work out their ideas as a group can be illuminating. A third benefit of conducting focus groups with adolescents is that participants are empowered to have a key role in the research agenda because their ideas and experiences, in their own words, comprise the research (Carson et al., 2001).

Social Constructivist Paradigm

The methodology for the focus groups in the present research was grounded in the social constructivist paradigm. The social constructivist paradigm is "phenomenological, interpretive, holistic and humanistic" (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). According to Nelson and Prilleltensky, this paradigm focuses on language, communication, subjective human experience, and the meaning that people make of their experiences in their social, cultural, and political contexts. Obviously, girls decode and produce relevant meanings from the mass media. However, they do not do so in a social vacuum. Instead, girls are influenced by their social experiences in particular, their life experiences in general, and their developmental stages (Gilligan, 1982).

Recruitment Strategy

An attempt was made to recruit participants for the focus groups via stratified random sampling; however, as will be described, due to recruitment issues, a convenience sample was used instead. First, all possible schools within Winnipeg, Manitoba were identified using a list of schools in school districts differentiated by high, medium, and low SES (Winnipeg School Division, 2008). According to the Manitoba Child Health Atlas (2004), there were four Winnipeg Neighbourhood Clusters based on a Socio-economic Factor Index (SEFI). SEFI reflects household variables, including percent unemployment, percent female single households, and percent high school graduates. These four neighbourhood clusters range from most advantaged to most disadvantaged. They can be qualitatively described as high social class, middle class, low-middle class, and lower class. Next, schools were chosen randomly from each area. It was expected that recruiting girls from at least two schools, for each grade, from three of these social class area clusters (e.g., defined as high, medium, and low social class areas by Manitoba Child Health Atlas) would provide enough participants for the focus groups.

With these goals in mind, permission was first obtained from the superintendants of each school division to recruit participants for my study from their division. To achieve this, letters were sent to the superintendant of each school division. Only two superintendants granted permission to recruit teachers. One superintendant did not respond, even after several emails and phone calls. The Assistant Superintendent of the other school divisions informed the researcher that permission would not be granted, stating that the issue of sexualisation was too "promiscuous" and "risky" to study with their students. Unfortunately, this division was the largest and most socio-economically diverse division in Winnipeg. Their refusal to cooperate made it impossible to recruit participants from lower income communities. In the end,

permission was obtained to recruit participants from schools in only two school divisions. These school divisions both serve predominantly middle-class neighbourhoods.

Next, recruitment letters were sent to the principles of all the schools in these two school divisions (*n*=55). Even after follow-up attempts, responses were only received from a total of one junior high school, two elementary schools, and one high school. Each of these replied positively, granting me permission to approach teachers within their school and to recruit students from their classes. Within each of these schools, recruitment letters were sent out to all grade 6, 9 and 12 teachers. After this step, permission was granted from teachers to recruit from three grade 6 classes, five grade 9 classes, and four grade 12 classes.

The researcher went to the classes of each of the teachers who had granted permission, and spoke to the class as a whole (male and female students were present in the grade 9 and 12 classes; only females were present in the grade 6 classes). The purpose of the research, as well as the expectations and requirements, were explained. The researcher also answered questions from students. All female students were given study information and permission forms to take home, to be signed by themselves and their parents if they wanted to participate. Students were asked to return the forms to their teachers. The researcher collected a total of 64 signed forms. The interested students were divided into three focus groups for each grade (nine groups total). Each focus group consisted of girls from the same school and grade, but not necessarily the same class. Prior to going to participating classrooms, principals gave the researcher times during which she would be able to conduct the focus group at their school. On the consent form, girls and/or their parents indicated which of the available dates they or their daughter would be able to attend. Based upon their stated availability, the researcher divided girls into the separate groups. Five to nine girls participated per focus group.

Compensation. In order to compensate girls for their time and work, they were told in class presentations about the research project, as well as in the forms provided, that they would receive $10.00 for participating.

In order to increase the likelihood of gaining consent from school superintendants, principals, and teachers, the study information package included an offer to provide the participants and their classmates with a 30-minute media literacy workshop, conducted by the researcher. Galician's (2004) model for conducting media literacy groups was utilized to plan these workshops (Appendix D). In this model, the facilitator interacts with the participants, getting them to reflect on the ads or videos, proceeding to educate the participants about the harm of negative media depictions and to teach media literacy. This is beneficial in that participants are provided with media literacy education and training regarding sexualisation of girls, which is an empowering experience (About-Face, 2008). It was hoped that the workshops would be helpful in obtaining school and parental approval for the project. Disappointingly, none of the teachers or principals acted on this offer and, therefore, no media literacy groups were taught. No feedback was given as to why this offer was not taken up by principals and/or teachers. It may have been related to their already busy teaching schedules and planned activities for students (e.g., their curriculum is already full, their after-hours spaces are already allocated to other extra-curricular activities).

Focus Group Design

As indicated above, the focus groups were age-segregated (grades 6, 9, and 12) to potentially capture any developmental differences in how media messages are interpreted by girls. Adolescence generally begins around age 12 and continues until at least age 18 (Erikson, 1968). Thus, these grade groups potentially allow for uncovering thematic differences in the

interpretation of the media at different stages of adolescence (i.e., early, middle, and late). Technically, the focus groups followed a *multiple–category design* (Krueger & Casey, 2009), defined as groups that are conducted with several types of participants (e.g., girls in different grades). This design allows the researcher to make comparisons in two ways, namely from one group to another within a category (in this case, within each grade) and also from category to category (between grades). As mentioned in the previous section describing the recruitment strategy, it was intended to also vary the focus groups in terms of social class (e.g., lower, medium, and upper). This would have added a third category of participants. However, as explained above, this proved impossible.

Focus Group Composition

It is generally considered useful to create focus groups characterized by homogeneity (Krueger & Casey, 2000, 2009). Homogenous focus groups are comprised of participants who share something in common, such as grade. The literature also emphasizes that it is acceptable to use homogenous groups of acquaintances (i.e., people who know each other). Often this is done because participants are recruited in ways that make it unavoidable (such as recruiting participants from classes of students). Positively, focus groups comprised of acquaintances can help increase self-disclosure among participants (Stewart et al., 1997) by ensuring that they can comfortably discuss a topic in ways that are useful to the researcher (Morgan, 1997). The current focus groups were designed with these recommendations in mind. Each group consisted of same-grade students participating with other students from the same school, with whom they knew beforehand (by virtue of going to the same school, being in the same class).

In recruiting the focus group members, the intent was to understand (not infer); not to generalize (but to determine the range); and not to make statements about the population but to

provide insights into how people in the groups perceive the situation (Carlson, 2009). Therefore, randomization was not a factor in selecting participants, although it was important to ensure that the recruitment strategy was not biased (e.g., not picked on a priori knowledge of the girls and their opinions and experiences of this media). As described earlier, the focus groups for the present study were selected from all the schools and classes for which permission to recruit was granted. Although this recruitment procedure was different from the intended random recruit from all schools in all school divisions, it met the criterion of no a priori knowledge of participants.

Number of Focus Groups

The "rule of thumb" of best practices in deciding on the number of focus groups to run is three or four groups for each category of individual (Krueger & Casey, 2000, 2009; Morgan, 1997). Once these three or four groups have been conducted, it can be determined if saturation has been reached. Saturation is the point at which the full range of ideas has been heard and new information is not being received (Carson et al., 2001; Morgan, 1997). This is determined by looking for patterns and themes across the groups (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Morgan, 1997). In general, three groups are adequate to reach saturation and rarely will more groups need to be conducted (Morgan, 1997). Therefore, although in general the recommendation is to do as many groups as necessary in order to provide a trustworthy answer to the research question, this usually means running three groups per category. In the present research, three focus groups per grade were conducted. The focus groups were analyzed for themes and patterns as they were being conducted, enabling the researcher to conclude that saturation had been reached, given that similar patterns of themes and codes were occurring across groups and new information was not surfacing.

Focus Group Size

The number of participants in the focus groups ranged from 5-9 girls. In grade 6, the focus groups contained 6-9 girls. In grade 9, the focus groups contained 5-9 girls. In grade 12, the focus groups contained 6-7 girls. The specific size of the focus groups was determined by availability of girls for a specific date. The sizes of the focus groups were within standard recommendations (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Morgan, 1997). In general, the ideal size of a focus group is from 4 to 12 participants (Carson et al., 2001, Morgan, 1997). However, these numbers are only "rules of thumb" rather than hard upper and lower limits (Morgan, 1997; Stewart et al., 1994). Having smaller number of participants runs the risk of having too few participants to sustain the discussion, whereas having too many participants runs the risk of difficulty in containing it, as well as the risk that not all participants will have an adequate opportunity to speak.

Setting

The focus groups were held at the girls' own schools during after-school hours. The focus group environment was intended to be a familiar place where girls would feel comfortable, while also not introducing difficult transportation and supervision issues. The specific rooms included a drama room, a library, an office board room, and a guidance counsellor's room. These were all private, familiar, comfortable rooms in which the girls could participate.

The researcher facilitated each of the focus groups. Stewart, Shamdasani, and Rook (2007) advise that the same facilitator conduct all focus group sessions to ensure consistency. Prior to running the groups, the literature regarding effective focus group interviewing was reviewed. For example, Stewart et al. report that effective group facilitators demonstrate a number of personality traits including being insightful about people, being flexible, able to

express thoughts clearly, empathic, genuinely interested in others, expressive of feelings, and animated. The researcher practiced asking the focus group interview questions via role-playing with fellow psychology students. They gave feedback to the researcher confirming that the above characteristics were portrayed.

Materials

Five Music video clips (i.e., portions of music videos) taken from the previously described content analysis were used as the music video stimulus. These included clips from Britney Spears, Katy Perry, Lady Gaga, and Pussycat Dolls. All clips contained exemplars of sexualisation. For the advertising media stimulus, eight sexualised advertisements from the content analysis were colour-photocopied and placed in duo-tangs for each individual girl to hold.

Advertisements and videos were picked after discussion with the research assistant coders from the content analysis. Specific advertisements and videos were chosen because they clearly portrayed sexualisation. In particular, media images were chosen because they were clear (e.g., a girl looking directly at the camera). As well, images of a variety of age groups of girls were chosen (e.g., children and teenagers). For example, an advertisement for shoes found in Seventeen magazine that sexualizes children was chosen. The female cartoon character depicted in the ad highly resembles a Bratz doll, a brand of doll popular with young children. She is wearing high heels, lots of make-up, a short tight skirt, and a very small tank top emphasizing her breasts with a bare midriff. In a chosen perfume advertisement from Seventeen, a female who appears to be a teenage girl is lying in the grass, holding a perfume bottle. She appears to be naked and looks vulnerable. In regard to the videos, the Katy Perry Video “California Girls” was chosen for clearly portraying sexualisation of young girls. In it, Katy Perry is highly sexualised

and nearly naked, with the exception of whipped cream and cherries covering her breasts in resemblance of a bikini top. In the video clip, she shoots whipped cream from her breasts, among the "Candyland" children's board game backdrop, while animated toys and candy figures (e.g., gingerbread men) dance around her. The video clips combined took roughly five minutes to view.

Pre-focus group questionnaire. As many of the focus group questions of interest are matters of degree (e.g., to what degree do girls feel pressured to imitate the images), the girls completed a brief, anonymous, quantitative self-report questionnaire assessing their degree of agreement with each of several statements regarding the media images. This questionnaire was designed by the researcher (Appendix C). The questions were answered on a five-point scale from no agreement to strong agreement. The questions were designed to mirror the main questions of the semi-structured focus group interview. For example, one issue was how this media makes girls feel (i.e., does it make girls feel negative about themselves? Does it make them feel positive about themselves?). This issue was addressed in an open-ended fashion during the focus groups. On the pre-focus group questionnaire, questions related to this issue were also asked, namely, "To what extent do these images make you feel negative about yourself?" and "To what extent do these images make you feel positive about yourself?" In this way, the results of the pre-focus group questionnaire were intended in part to triangulate the thematic analysis results. For example, if in the focus groups most girls said that they feel negatively about themselves after viewing sexualised media, their responses to the corresponding question on the pre-focus group questionnaire should be consistent. That is, girls should tend to agree with this question on the pre-focus group questionnaire.

The pre-focus group questionnaire was administered so as to ensure confidentiality (this will be described in more detail later when the procedure is described). Girls completed the pre-focus group questionnaire prior to the focus group conversation so that the latter would not influence the former. Again, this will be explained in more detail in the procedure section. All girls completed the questionnaire.

Focus group proper semi-structured interview. A list of semi-structured and mostly open-ended interview questions was used for the focus group discussions (Appendix D). These questions applied to the media generally, as well as to specific areas of interest (e.g., to what extent do girls feel pressured to imitate the images). These questions were based upon the literature reviewed and theoretical questions of interest. For example, it has been argued that this media is widely seen by girls and that it is harmful to girls (APA, 2007). Is it? Do girls think it influences how they feel about themselves? It has been argued that this media sends specific messages about girls to girls (e.g., that their worth comes from being a good sex object) (Zurbriggen & Roberts, 2013). Do girls interpret sexualised media as sending these messages? What do girls make of this media? It has been argued that girls are at-risk of internalizing these media messages and then imitating the sexualised media females (e.g., self-sexualising) (Zurbriggen & Roberts, 2013). Do girls think they do? Do they think this media influences girls, and how so?

More specifically, based upon the literature reviewed, the researcher was interested in understanding girls' thoughts, feelings, and opinions about the following related to sexualised girl media: (1) Do girls see girls portrayed in a sexualised way in the media in their everyday lives (i.e., are they aware of being targeted in this way?); (2) What do girls notice about this media? For example, what characteristics do they pick up on (i.e., how are of the sexualised

characteristics are they? Are they paying attention to this? What messages about girls are they interpreting, if any?); (3) How does viewing sexualised girls in the media make them feel about themselves?; and (4) Do girls imitate this media? If they do, in what ways, and why? The focus group interview questions were designed to probe for girls' responses to these questions.

The interview questions encouraged consistency of topics across the different focus groups, while also allowing for some degree of flexibility to discuss any topics raised. That is, although it was deemed important to probe for specific questions of interest, it was also important to leave room for girls to independently bring up what they thought was important to talk about in regard to this media. All girls who signed up for the focus groups participated, with the exception of two girls in grade 9, both of whom indicated that this was due to forgetting about conflicting extracurricular activities.

Post-focus group questionnaire. Lastly, the girls also filled out a Post-Focus Group Questionnaire (Appendix E) developed by the researcher to assess selected variables of interest about the participants: (a) social desirability influences during the focus group procedure (any non-truthfulness and why, i.e., did they feel threatened by another girl in the group); (b) participant empowerment (e.g., did they learn something of value?); and (c) ethnicity. Ethnicity was assessed by asking "What is your ethnicity?" and giving girls examples of what this meant (e.g., Caucasian/White, African-American/Black, Asian). Girls could respond however they saw most fit. For example, some responded Asian, whereas others responded more specifically (i.e., Chinese, Japanese). This was deemed the most straightforward and easily understandable way to assess ethnicity with young girls. The post-focus group questionnaire was developed to assess factors that may have influenced the results of the focus groups and may have influenced the validity and context of the groups. For example, it was important to probe if girls felt able to say

anything they wanted during the group, without holding back information. That is, it was important to have a check to validate that the results of the focus groups did indeed reflect the range of opinions and ideas of the girls who participated. All girls completed the questionnaire.

Pilot Group

Conducting a pilot group is recommended in focus group research for the development and fine-tuning of group questionnaires (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Stewart et al., 2007). In the pilot group, it can be seen if the research questions are clearly understood by the respondents; if the respondents are able to articulate the answer; and if the answer is understood by the facilitator. Good questions evoke conversation, are clear, and are short (Stewart et al., 2007).

Prior to running the focus groups proper, a pilot focus group was conducted with girls from a school not participating in the main study. Given the difficulties in recruiting girls and getting approval from school districts, no attempt was made to recruit girls in the same manner for the practice pilot group. Instead, needing only a few girls, they were recruited in a more informal way. The researcher approached parents and/or teachers of adolescents who are acquaintances to see if the adults (or their colleagues) knew of girls who would be interested in participating in the pilot group. An acquaintance with a daughter in ninth grade was given the same study information and consent form package that was given to the girls recruited for the focus groups proper. The acquaintance and her daughter agreed to having her daughter participate in the pilot group. The acquaintance also handed out the informed consent forms and the project information to four of her daughters' same-grade friends' parents. These parents and daughters agreed to their participation. The pilot group was conducted with these five girls (age 14-15).

The pilot group provided information regarding the suitability and sequencing of the interview questions, how they might be improved, and if the expected length of time of the sessions was accurate. For example, it was demonstrated that the pilot group procedure took roughly 60 minutes (the amount of time generally allocated by teachers or principals to run the focus groups-proper). In addition, the answers the girls provided to the questions asked indicated that they did understood the question as intended. Pilot group participants were asked directly if they understood the questions, if any parts had been confusing; if participation was enjoyable; if the procedure felt too long/boring; and so forth. After the pilot group, small changes to the wording of the questionnaires were made. Overall, the data from the pilot group indicated that the planned procedure for the focus groups-proper was satisfactory.

Procedure

The focus group procedure was as follows. Groups convened in the allocated space and introductions were made. Refreshments were offered. Limits to confidentiality were reviewed. The girls were given their ten dollars as compensation for their time, prior to beginning the focus group (so that they would not feel pressured to respond at all, or in a way they didn't want to respond, in order to receive their compensation at the end).

In order to not unduly influence the girls' perceptions of the ads and video clips, very little was said about the media by way of introduction. Instead girls were asked: "Do you ever read Seventeen magazine? Have you ever heard of it?" The vast majority or all girls responded yes, across all groups. They were then told, "Each of you will get a duo-tang. Inside each duo-tang are a number of advertisements from that magazine. I want you to look at each of these advertisements. Later on we will discuss them." Girls viewed the ads (placed in duo-tangs given to each girl).

After the girls appeared to have had sufficient time to look at all the ads, they were then asked, “Do you watch music videos? Have you ever heard of Katy Perry? Pussycat Dolls?” In response to this question the vast majority or all girls across all groups indicated yes, they knew of these singers and listen to their music. Next they were told, “I am going to show you about 5 minutes of a few clips from some music videos by these artists. From what you just told me, I imagine you have seen these videos or heard these songs before. Watch the videos, and later on we will discuss the video clips. I am only going to play them once, but later on, if you would like to see them again, just ask me, and I can play them again for you.” Thus, they were not prompted in any way about what to look for or what they might see. The girls then watched the music videos (played on a lap-top computer).

After looking at the music video clips, participants completed the self-report, pre-focus group questionnaire independently. Girls were spaced out to provide privacy from others (e.g., at separate desks). I was able to watch and conclude that girls were working independently, not looking at other girls’ responses, or appearing concerned that other girls were looking at their responses. As stated above, the girls completed these questionnaire ratings of the media images prior to the group discussion to ensure that it did not influence their ratings. This task took roughly 10 minutes to complete.

By way of instructions to the girls and as an introduction to the focus groups proper, girls were told, “Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Now I am going to ask you to discuss the advertisements and the music video clips you just viewed as a group. I will be asking you some questions to talk about amongst yourselves. Please be ensured, there are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. I am interested in hearing all of your opinions and I appreciate any and all of your ideas. I am really interested in what you girls think and feel. This discussion

is about your thoughts and feelings. Please feel free to say as much or as little as you like. I would love to hear from all of you, but no one will be pressured to say anything. Does anyone have any questions before we start?"

Next, the focus group discussion commenced. The focus groups were videotaped. Participants were able, if they desired, to refer to any of the ads inside of the binders (e.g., to open up the binder and point it out) during their discussion. Girls were told that music video clips would be replayed upon request, so they were able to re-examine any or all aspects of the music video clips. Girls were asked to reflect on/think about the ads and videos they saw as they responded to the interview questions.

As stated earlier, the purpose of the focus groups was to encourage girls to share their individual experiences and to collectively make sense of the media messages. In order to facilitate this process, discussions were allowed to be as self-directed as possible, and were guided minimally, using the interview list of questions. Each focus group started with an open-ended, warm-up question intended to make participants feel comfortable and ease them into the discussion. More specifically, every group discussion started with questions such as, "So, first of all, what did you think? What did you notice? Do you have anything to say generally about the advertisements and videos, before I ask any specific questions?" The focus groups took roughly 30-40 minutes each to complete. After this time, generally it was apparent that saturation had been reached.

Afterwards, participants filled out the Post-Focus Group Questionnaire (5-10 minutes), again independently. In total, the entire procedure took roughly 60 minutes to complete.

After the post-focus group questionnaires were collected, the girls were thanked for their efforts and given written debriefing materials that provided information about the purpose of the

study. The researcher's contact information was included in this handout so the girls and/or their parents could contact the researcher with further questions or concerns regarding the study. They were also given a list of helping resources (phone numbers, email addresses) related to issues that might have been triggered for girls during the focus groups. For example, a participant with negative body image and disordered eating problems might have felt distressed if these issues came up in the focus group discussion. The researcher remained available after the focus groups in case any participant wished to discuss an issue that arose as a result of the group. This enabled me to see if anyone appeared distressed or upset by her participation.

Data Analysis Strategy

The focus group videos were transcribed verbatim in a standard word processing document. After consulting the focus group methodology and analysis literature, it was decided that the "the classic focus group analysis strategy," also called the "scissor and sort technique" (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Stewart et al., 2007), was the best analytic strategy. In general, the key elements of this strategy are completing a thematic analysis, followed by cutting, sorting, and arranging the focus group transcripts based on underlying themes. The steps of this process will be operationally described in detail later in this section. This continues to be the method most often used to analyze focus groups, allowing the analyst an instructive method to identify themes and categorize results (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Krueger & Casey, 2000). It is preferable because it breaks down the job into "doable chunks" and makes the analysis a visual and concrete process (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

Other qualitative methods were considered, such as grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). However, these other qualitative analysis techniques didn't seem to be the best fit for the current situation. For example, true grounded theory requires that a researcher code and analyze

a small number of interviews, develop preliminary codes and themes, and then do more interviews to test out the theory that has been developed. It would have been impossible to conduct rounds of focus groups in schools in this manner (i.e., due to restrictions from school divisions and time constraints posed by the school year), so grounded theory was not appropriate.

Although the classic focus group analysis strategy is specific to focus group research, it has many characteristics common to all qualitative methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Stewart et al., 2007). For example, it is highly compatible with the steps used in conducting a qualitative thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clark (2006). These steps include (a) familiarization with data (e.g., transcription, reading and re-reading, initial ideas), (b) generating initial codes (collecting data relevant to each code), (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) producing the report.

Visual representations were relied upon in the analysis, such as drawing pictures of findings. Flowcharts, matrixes, and diagrams were generated to help understand, depict, and communicate the results. Visual representation of data is used across qualitative analysis strategies (e.g., Morgan, 1997; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Lastly, similar to grounded theory research, memos (also known as code notes) were written which discuss the codes/categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Memos are short (i.e., a few words or lines to a paragraph or two) documents written to oneself as you proceed through the coding/analysis of data. They are written records of analyses related to the formulation of themes and concepts. The researcher kept a written record of my thoughts, ideas, and questions about the data and the emerging themes as she analyzed the transcripts.

The Classic Method for Focus Group Analysis: Steps

As indicated previously, data analysis followed the standard steps advised for the classic focus group method (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Morgan, 1993). Although these steps can be performed by a computer or by hand, the latter was chosen. The computer method has the benefit of being quicker (if one is familiar with the software, as it can take time to learn to use), but it has the limitation of being more expensive (Stewart et al, 2004). Due to the expense of buying software and lack of experience with it, the researcher chose to conduct the analyses by hand. Conducting an analysis by hand is justified in the literature (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Morgan, 1993; Stewart et al, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

In the first step, a thematic analysis was completed (Krueger & Casey, 2009). First, the entire transcripts were read to develop a big picture regarding what the focus group discussions entailed. Next, "line by line" coding was completed (Krueger & Casey, 2009). As each line of the transcripts was read, the researcher asked questions such as, "What is being said here? What is this line about? What is this participant saying? What is the meaning here?" Then, each line was coded (i.e., given a label to represent the main idea(s) in that line of the transcript). In the margins of each of the focus group transcripts, and on separate paper, notes were taken about what each focus group participant seemed to be saying, meaning, or referring. Then the transcripts were read through again. In some cases, codes were added. Notes connecting codes to other codes were developed.

The transcripts continued to be read and re-read. Ideas were generated regarding the codes, preliminary themes, impressions, and connections between ideas. Diagrams (e.g., flow-charts with arrows connecting my ideas and emergent themes; concentric circles and webs showing how ideas and categories seemed to emerge from each other) were made. This process

began while the researcher was simultaneously running and transcribing the groups. This process continued for months after having completed all the focus groups.

In the next step, the data was looked at in more detail to identify themes. Themes are abstract, summarizing statements or labels of what had been said in the focus groups (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The researcher then looked through the data again, made lists of the themes and their inter-relations, and diagrammed their connections.

Next, a coding scheme for themes was developed and the data was coded. That is, the themes that had been developed were applied to the data. To do so, the whole set was read again, line by line, and coded according to the themes. At this stage, sub-codes/sub-themes were also developed. Some lines of the data could be coded in several different ways, reflecting ideas associated with more than one theme. In the end, the whole data set was coded. This ensured that the analysis was truly comprehensive and did not just concentrate on the atypical.

At this stage of the thematic analysis, the researcher felt comfortable that no new ideas were emerging. The researcher then went on to the more specific "scissor technique" (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Patton & Cochran, 2002; Stewart et al., 2004). In this step the transcripts were literally cut into pieces. First, before cutting apart the transcripts, to ensure that the researcher knew where each of the quotes came from originally, each line of each transcript was numbered and transcripts were printed on different colors of paper, thereby color coding the transcripts by group and grade. A second, un-cut version of each of the transcripts was maintained. Next, the transcripts were cut into individual quotes representing different themes. That is, quotes were extracted from their original contexts and put together with other examples representing the same theme. Then the researcher began categorizing and organizing quotes of different themes by focus group question. The researcher was still constantly comparing, contrasting, and making

decisions concerning whether what was said in a quote reflected something similar or different from other things that had been said. Soon many piles of quotes representing different categories and subcategories of themes were developed.

In some cases, decisions were made to combine subcategories or categories. Once quotes were arranged into categories and sub-categories of themes, all focus groups and grades were compared. How were they similar and how were they different? The researcher looked specifically to see what themes, if any, cut across the questions. Did certain concepts come up repeatedly? There were such concepts, so the final written report was restructured around themes/ideas rather than around the focus group interview questions.

Decision making processes during the thematic analysis. During the thematic analysis, decisions were made regarding how much weight or emphasis to give various quotes, codes, and themes. To do so, the following four criteria were utilized: *frequency, specificity, emotion, and extensiveness* (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Morgan, 1993; Patton & Cochran, 2002). Regarding *frequency,* in focus group analyses usually more weight is given to more frequent comments. However, subjective appraisal and decision making is important, because what is most frequently said is not necessarily most important (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Patton & Cochran, 2002). Regarding *specificity,* typically more emphasis is given to comments that are specific (i.e., that provide more detail) (Morgan, 1993; Patton & Cochran, 2002). Regarding *emotion,* typically more weight is given to comments or themes about which the participants show emotion, enthusiasm, passion, or intensity in their answers (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Morgan, 1993; Patton & Cochran, 2002). *Extensiveness* was the last criterion. Frequency and extensiveness are related but different. Extensiveness is how many different people said something. In general, more weight is given to comments, ideas, and themes that are relayed by many people (Carlson, 2009;

Morgan, 1997; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Patton & Cochran, 2002). Overall, the best evidence that a topic or theme is worth emphasizing comes from a combination of the above factors (e.g., how many groups mentioned the topic, how much energy and enthusiasm the topic generated among the participants, and how many people within each of the groups mentioned the topic). This is known as "group to group validation." Group to group validation means that, whenever a topic comes up, it generates a significant level of energy among a significant proportion of the participants across most groups (Morgan, 1993).

The final step was to write a narrative report, structured around the major themes represented by participants' responses to the focus group questions. In writing this narrative report, quotes were selected to highlight, demonstrate, and capture the essence of what was said. Quotes are used as evidence in qualitative research (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Morgan, 1993). An attempt was made to use quotes from each grade of girl without including so many quotes that the report became chaotic and hard to read. Typically, about three quotes per theme or category are presented in a final report for focus groups (Krueger & Casey, 2009). However, reporting focus groups results, as with other qualitative research methods, has no hard and fast rules. Nonetheless, when writing the final report, the above recommendation was taken into consideration. Effort was made to balance the direct quotation of the participants with summarization of the discussions, keeping in mind that too many quotations can be chaotic and too much summarization can be dry. The next section, presents the results of the focus group questionnaires and thematic analysis, beginning with the Pre-Focus Group Questionnaire.

Results: Focus Group Analysis

Pre-Focus Group Questionnaire

Descriptive statistics. Table 26 provides descriptive statistics for girls' responses to each question. The response range for each question was from 1-5, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = agree somewhat, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree.

As can be seen from Table 26, overall girls indicated the strongest agreement to Question 8: *Does sexualised media influence your peers to want to change their appearance?* (*M* = 4.1, SD = .9). Girls also indicated strong agreement to Question 10: *Does this media make your peers feel negative about themselves?* (*M* = 3.9, SD = .9); and Question 4: *Does this media influence your peers' behaviour with boys?* (*M* = 3.7, SD = 1.2). Girls indicated some agreement to Question 9: *Does this media influence you to change your appearance?* (*M* = 3.3, SD = 1.3); and Question 12: *Does this media make you to feel negatively about yourself?* (*M* = 3.3, SD = 1.5). Girls also indicated agreement with Question 2*: Do you describe these media females as sexy*? (*M* = 3.1, SD = 1.2) and Question 3*: Do you think these images are considered a cultural ideal for women and girls?* (*M* = 3.2, SD = 1.5). As is also evident from Table 26, participants most strongly disagreed with Question 5: *Does this media influence your behaviour with boys?* (*M* = 2.2, SD = 1.2.); Question 7: *Does this media influence your behaviour with girls?* (*M* = 2.0, SD = 1.3); Question 11: *Does this media make your peers feel positive about themselves?* (*M* = 2.0, SD = 0.8); and Question 13: *Does this media make you feel positive about yourself?* (*M* = 1.9 SD = 1.0).

Responses to pre-focus group questions: Proportion. Table 26 also provides the number and percent (proportion) of girls' responses from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly

Table 26

Descriptive Statistics for the Pre-Focus Group Questionnaire

	Grade 6 (*n* = 23)		Grade 9 (*n* = 19)		Grade 12 (*n* = 20)		All Grades (*n* = 62)	
1. Images attractive?								
Mean and (S.D)	2.2	(1.1)	3.1	(1.1)	3.5	(1.0)	2.9	(1.2)
Strongly disagree	9	(39%)	2	(11%)	1	(5%)	12	(19%)
Disagree	2	(9%)	3	(16%)	1	(5%)	6	(10%)
Somewhat	10	(43%)	7	(37%)	7	(35%)	24	(39%)
Agree	2	(9%)	6	(32%)	9	(45%)	17	(27%)
Strongly agree	0	(0%)	1	(5%)	2	(10%)	3	(5%)
2. Images sexy?								
Mean and (S.D)	2.6	(1.3)	3.1	(1.2)	3.7	(0.9)	3.1	(1.2)
Strongly disagree	6	(26%)	3	(16%)	0	(0%)	9	(15%)
Disagree	5	(22%)	2	(11%)	2	(10%)	9	(15%)
Somewhat	7	(30%)	6	(32%)	6	(30%)	19	(31%)
Agree	2	(9%)	7	(37%)	9	(45%)	18	(29%)
Strongly agree	3	(13%)	1	(5%)	3	(15%)	7	(11%)
3. Cultural ideal?								
Mean and (S.D)	2.6	(1.7)	3.7	(1.2)	3.4	(1.3)	3.2	(1.5)
Strongly disagree	10	(43%)	0	(0%)	2	(10%)	12	(19%)
Disagree	2	(9%)	4	(21%)	4	(20%)	10	(16%)
Somewhat	4	(17%)	4	(21%)	4	(20%)	12	(19%)
Agree	2	(9%)	5	(26%)	5	(25%)	12	(19%)
Strongly agree	5	(22%)	6	(32%)	5	(25%)	16	(26%)

	Grade 6 (*n* = 23)		Grade 9 (*n* = 19)		Grade 12 (*n* = 20)		All Grades (*n* = 62)	
4. Influence peers with boys?								
Mean and (S.D)	2.9	(1.3)	4.0	(0.9)	4.3	(0.9)	3.7	(1.2)
Strongly disagree	5	(22%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	5	(8%)
Disagree	2	(9%)	1	(5%)	1	(5%)	4	(7%)
Somewhat	9	(39%)	4	(21%)	2	(10%)	15	(24%)
Agree	5	(22%)	8	(42%)	8	(40%)	21	(34%)
Strongly agree	2	(9%)	6	(32%)	9	(45%)	17	(27%)
5. Influence you with boys?								
Mean and (S.D)	1.3	(0.5)	2.8	(1.3)	2.5	(1.1)	2.2	(1.2)
Strongly disagree	18	(78%)	3	(16%)	3	(15%)	24	(39%)
Disagree	4	(17%)	6	(32%)	7	(35%)	17	(27%)
Somewhat	1	(4%)	4	(21%)	7	(35%)	12	(19%)
Agree	0	(0%)	4	(21%)	2	(10%)	6	(10%)
Strongly agree	0	(0%)	2	(11%)	1	(5%)	3	(5%)
6. Influence peers with girls?								
Mean and (S.D)	2.3	(1.2)	3.2	(1.0)	3.4	(1.0)	3.0	(1.2)
Strongly disagree	8	(35%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	8	(13%)
Disagree	4	(17%)	5	(26%)	5	(25%)	14	(23%)
Somewhat	7	(30%)	7	(37%)	5	(25%)	19	(31%)
Agree	3	(13%)	5	(26%)	7	(35%)	15	(24%)
Strongly agree	1	(4%)	2	(11%)	3	(15%)	6	(10%)

	Grade 6 (*n* = 23)		Grade 9 (*n* = 19)		Grade 12 (*n* = 20)		All Grades (*n* = 62)	
7. Influences you with girls?								
Mean and (S.D)	1.6	(1.3)	2.2	(1.2)	2.5	(1.1)	2.0	(1.3)
Strongly disagree	18	(78%)	8	(42%)	5	(25%)	31	(50%)
Disagree	1	(5%)	2	(11%)	3	(15%)	6	(10%)
Somewhat	1	(5%)	7	(37%)	10	(50%)	18	(29%)
Agree	1	(5%)	1	(5%)	1	(5%)	3	(5%)
Strongly agree	2	(8%)	1	(5%)	1	(5%)	4	(7%)
8. Peers change appearance?								
Mean and (S.D)	4.0	(1.1)	4.0	(0.8)	4.5	(0.8)	4.1	(1.0)
Strongly disagree	1	(4%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	1	(2%)
Disagree	1	(4%)	1	(5%)	0	(0%)	2	(3%)
Somewhat	6	(26%)	3	(15%)	3	(15%)	12	(19%)
Agree	5	(22%)	11	(57%)	5	(25%)	21	(34%)
Strongly agree	10	(43%)	4	(21%)	12	(60%)	26	(42%)
9. You change appearance?								
Mean and (S.D)	3.4	(1.6)	3.0	(1.2)	3.6	(1.1)	3.3	(1.3)
Strongly disagree	5	(22%)	3	(15%)	2	(10%)	10	(16%)
Disagree	2	(9%)	4	(21%)	0	(0%)	6	(10%)
Somewhat	3	(13%)	4	(21%)	5	(25%)	12	(19%)
Agree	6	(26%)	7	(37%)	10	(50%)	23	(37%)
Strongly agree	7	(30%)	1	(5%)	3	(15%)	11	(18%)

	Grade 6 (*n* = 23)		Grade 9 (*n* = 19)		Grade 12 (*n* = 20)		All Grades (*n* = 62)	
10. Peers feel negative?								
Mean and (S.D)	3.7	(1.1)	4.2	(0.9)	3.9	(0.7)	3.9	(0.9)
Strongly disagree	1	(4%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	1	(2%)
Disagree	1	(4%)	1	(5%)	1	(5%)	3	(5%)
Somewhat	9	(39%)	3	(15%)	3	(15%)	15	(24%)
Agree	5	(22%)	7	(37%)	13	(65%)	25	(40%)
Strongly agree	7	(30%)	8	(42%)	3	(15%)	18	(29%)
11. Peers feel positive?								
Mean and (S.D)	2.0	(1.2)	2.1	(0.5)	1.9	(0.6)	2.0	(0.8)
Strongly disagree	8	(35%)	2	(11%)	5	(25%)	15	(24%)
Disagree	10	(43%)	14	(74%)	13	(65%)	37	(60%)
Somewhat	3	(13%)	3	(16%)	2	(10%)	8	(13%)
Agree	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Strongly agree	2	(9%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	2	(3%)
12. You feel negative?								
Mean and (S.D)	3.4	(1.7)	2.9	(1.3)	3.6	(1.2)	3.3	(1.5)
Strongly disagree	7	(30%)	5	(26%)	3	(15%)	15	(24%)
Disagree	0	(0%)	2	(11%)	0	(0%)	2	(3%)
Somewhat	3	(13%)	2	(11%)	3	(15%)	8	(13%)
Agree	4	(17%)	10	(53%)	11	(55%)	25	(40%)
Strongly agree	9	(39%)	0	(0%)	3	(15%)	12	(19%)

	Grade 6 (*n* = 23)		Grade 9 (*n* = 19)		Grade 12 (*n* = 20)		All Grades (*n* = 62)	
13. You feel positive?								
Mean and (S.D)	1.6	(0.7)	2.5	(1.2)	1.8	(1.0)	1.9	(1.0)
Strongly disagree	13	(57%)	3	(16%)	11	(55%)	27	(44%)
Disagree	7	(30%)	8	(42%)	4	(20%)	19	(31%)
Somewhat	3	(13%)	4	(21%)	4	(20%)	11	(18%)
Agree	0	(0%)	2	(11%)	1	(5%)	3	(5%)
Strongly agree	0	(0%)	2	(11%)	0	(0%)	2	(3%)

agree for each of the questions on the Pre-focus group questionnaire.

As is evident from Table 26, over 50% of girls agreed or strongly agreed with five questions. Overall, 69% of girls agreed or strongly agreed that this media makes their peers feel negatively about themselves; 59% of girls agreed or strongly agreed that this media makes them feel negatively about themselves; 76% of girls overall agreed or strongly agreed with the question that this makes their peers want to change their appearance; 59% of girls agreed or strongly agreed that this media makes them want to change their own appearance; and 61% agreed or strongly agreed that this media influences their peers' behaviour with boys.

A minority of girls agreed that this media influences girls' peers' behaviour toward other girls (34%) and their own behaviour toward other girls (12%). A minority of girls also agreed that this media is considered to be sexy (40%) and represents ideal cultural attractiveness for girls and women (42%).

The questions with the lowest agreement were Question 11: *Does this media make your peers feel positively? and* Question 13: *Do you think this media makes you feel positive about yourself*?

The pattern throughout Table 26 is girls reporting that other girls are more influenced than themselves, although they are influenced too. This possibly suggests socially-desirable responding.

In conclusion, overall the results of the pre-focus group questionnaire indicate that between one-quarter and one-half of the participants view sexualised media images as sexy and as representing a cultural ideal of beauty for women and girls. Girls across grades agreed that sexualised media makes girls (themselves and their peers) feel negatively and that it influences girls to change how they look (both themselves and their peers). Girls generally also expressed

agreement that sexualised media influences girls' (both themselves and their peers) behavior with boys.

There were some noteable grade differences. Generally, girls in grade 6 expressed less agreement than did girls in grade 9 and 12 in response to a number of questions, namely: The extent to which they consider these females attractive; the extent to which they think these images are sexy; the extent to which they believe these images are supposed to be representing cultural attractiveness (the ideal) for girls and women; the extent to which they believe these images influence girls (both themselves and their peers) behavior with boys; and the extent to which they believe these images to influence their peers behavior with girls.

Statistics comparing mean differences by grade. One-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine whether there were statistically significant differences by grade regarding focus group participants' responses to each of the questions on the questionnaire. The results of the ANOVAs can be found in Table 27. The ANOVA results revealed statistically significant differences by grade for seven of 13 questions. For these questions, post-hoc Scheffe tests were ran to determine which grades differed. Table 28 shows the results of the Scheffe rests. Grades that differed are marked with different postscripted letters (a,b,c). For six of seven questions, the results indicated that girls in grade 6 expressed lower agreement with the question than girls in either grade 9 and 12. These included Question 1: *Do you describe these images are attractive?;* Question 2: *Do you describe these images as sexy?;* Question 3: *Do you think these images represent the cultural ideal for women and girls?*; Question 5: *To what extent do you think media images like this influence your peers behavior towards boys*?; Question 4: *To what extent do you think media images like this influence your behavior with boys?*; and Question 7: *To what extent*

Table 27

One-Way ANOVA Comparing Girls' Pre-Focus Group Questionnaire Responses by Grade

Question	MS Between Groups	MS Within Groups	*F*
1. Attractive	9.18	1.08	8.48***
2. Sexy	5.81	1.34	4.34*
3. Cultural ideal	7.04	2.01	3.51*
4. Influence peers with boys	11.76	1.06	11.13***
5. Influence you with boys	14.58	0.96	15.21***
6. Influence peers with girls	6.84	1.21	5.67**
7. Influence you with girls	4.48	1.49	3.02
8. Peers change appearance	1.68	0.86	1.95
9. You change appearance	2.11	1.75	1.21
10. Peers feel negative	1.11	0.87	1.28
11. Peers feel positive	0.27	0.69	0.39
12. You feel negative	2.19	2.14	1.03
13. You feel positive	5.85	0.95	6.16**

Table 27 (Continued)

Notes: DF = 2 (between groups) and 59 (within groups) for each ANOVA

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Table 28

Post-Hoc Scheffe Test Multiple Comparison Results

Question	Grade	Mean and Standard Deviation	
1. Attractive			
	grade 6	2.2	(1.1)[a]
	grade 9	3.1	(1.1)[b]
	grade 12	3.5	(1.0)[b]
2. Sexy			
	grade 6	2.6	(1.3)[a]
	grade 9	3.1	(1.2)[b]
	grade 12	3.7	(0.9)[b]
3. Cultural ideal			
	grade 6	2.6	(1.7)[a]
	grade 9	3.7	(1.2)[b]
	grade 12	3.4	(1.3)[b]
4. Influence peers with boys			
	grade 6	2.9	(1.3)[a]
	grade 9	4.0	(0.9)[b]
	grade 12	4.3	(0.9)[b]
5. Influence you with boys			
	grade 6	1.3	(0.5)[a]
	grade 9	2.8	(1.3)[b]
	grade 12	2.5	(1.1)[b]
6. Influence peers with girls			
	grade 6	2.3	(1.2)[a]
	grade 9	3.2	(1.0)[b]
	grade 12	3.4	(1.0)[b]
7. You feel positive			
	grade 6	1.6	(0.7)[a]
	grade 9	2.5	(1.2)[b]
	grade 12	1.8	(1.0)[a]

Note: Different lettered postscripts (a, b, c) represent significantly different means. Same lettered postscripts represent means that were not significantly different.

do you think media images like this influence your peers' behavior with girls? These results are in keeping with the results by grade presented in Table 26.

Regarding the seventh significant ANOVA result, post-hoc Scheffe tests revealed that girls in grade 9 reported significantly higher agreement with Question 13: *Do you think that sexualised media makes you feel positive about yourself?* compared with girls in grades 6 (M =1.56, SD = .73) and 12 (M = 1.75, SD= .97). There were no differences between grade 9 and 12 on any question.

Focus Groups Thematic Analysis Results: Description of the Groups

Grade 6 focus groups. As a preliminary step to analyzing the focus group transcripts, the videotapes were examined and descriptively assessed. The girls in each group generally seemed to be comfortable with each other (e.g., no one seemed to be excluded; in all groups, every girl was observed to have at least one other girl in the group with whom they conversed as the focus group preliminaries were discussed and refreshments handed out). All girls seemed friendly to each other. Most girls expressed that they were happy to see the researcher again (as the researcher had been to their school earlier to recruit them) and eagerly engaged the researcher in conversation upon arrival. They made small talk with each other and with the researcher before starting the groups.

All of the grade 6 focus groups were very dynamic. They were characterized by lots of energetic and enthusiastic discussion. Girls began talking about the sexualisation portrayed in the videos and ads among themselves as soon as the groups commenced. The girls appeared to recognize all of the music videos and be familiar with the magazines used for the focus group stimuli. This was evident from the spontaneous comments they were making (e.g., "ooh, I've seen this one") and their ability to sing along with the songs.

For the most part, girls were engaged in the discussion and stayed on topic, although the grade 6 groups did have some “silliness” (e.g., giggling). This occurred mostly within the largest grade 6 group, in which there was a tendency for some girls to attempt to talk over each other. This tendency increased as girls became more comfortable with the topic and the conversation. The girls were reminded to take turns talking and to respect each other by listening. Relatedly, a couple of times the conversation briefly (e.g., for from one to five seconds) became inaudible to the researcher. In these cases, the girls were immediately asked to stop talking and to take turns, with which they complied. Overall, the girls’ discussion and behaviour within the groups were manageable and the few girls who did get off topic were easily redirected.

Although a few girls in the grade 6 (roughly one girl per group) were quiet and came across as shy, the majority of girls spoke up often, offering opinions. No girls could be singled out as dominating the conversation. In one grade 6 group, the school counsellor came in and got something off her desk. This was at the beginning of the group when girls were watching a video. The counsellor left quickly, but the girls were aware of her and were momentarily distracted. Overall, her presence didn’t appear to have a significant influence on the girls.

After one grade 6 group, two girls stayed to talk with the researcher about a friend who had “body image” issues. They were worried she was developing an eating disorder. The researcher explored their feelings about this (e.g., “How does that make you feel?” “How is this impacting you?”). They were praised for talking with me about their feelings and concerns. The girls said that they wanted to tell the researcher because they felt it was related to the talk, but not something they wanted to bring up in the group. The girls were encouraged to talk to their parents or another adult they trusted, which they agreed to do. They were given the hand-out of resources and those they could call if needed were pointed out (e.g., a Teen Help Line; a free

teen counseling service held at a local community mental health centre). The girls seemed relieved after our discussion and thanked the researcher for talking to them.

Grade 9 focus groups. At the beginning of each of the grade 9 groups, the girls as a whole appeared more shy, nervous, and "slow to warm up" than the girls in the grade 6 and 12 groups. Grade 9 girls appeared to be the most self-conscious of the three grades, requiring more time to cautiously "test the waters" with the other girls before becoming comfortable enough to offer more in-depth opinions within the group. Eventually, the girls did warm up, becoming engaged and comfortable with each other, and the conversations did start to flow, but it wasn't as immediate as it was in the grade 6 and grade 12 focus groups. For example, the girls in grade 6 and 12 initiated their own conversations, describing the sexualised girls in the videos and ads, whereas the grade 9 girls were initially hesitant and reserved, requiring the researcher to start the conversation by posing questions to them. This might be because mid-adolescent girls are in the height of endorsing the "imaginary audience" (Barnett, 2012). This refers to the phenomenon by which adolescents think of themselves as always being on stage. They feel as if everyone is looking at them and paying attention to everything that they do, say, and wear. This makes them extremely self-conscious.

In the largest grade 9 group, once the discussion became dynamic and everyone was fully engaged, there were a few points at which some girls started talking over each other. The girls were reminded to refrain from doing so and the problem was managed.

After one grade 9 group, two participants approached the researcher to talk about how they have been called "lesbians" by their peers in the past because they do not try to imitate sexualised media. They didn't feel comfortable bringing this up in the group, but thought it might be something the researcher should know about. They did not seem distressed when

talking about this situation/experience. Nonetheless, they said that it felt good talking about it with the researcher. They were asked what it is like to be ‘name called’ and ‘labelled’ in this manner. How did it make them feel? What were their reactions to this? The researcher probed to see if this was related to other forms of bullying and to see if it was ongoing. The girls denied that this was the case and stated that they were not experiencing distress. However, they continued to express negative feelings related to these “homophobic statements” and said they thought it was not okay to call people “gay” because they don’t want to be “sexy.” The researcher validated their feelings and opinions (i.e., accepted their point of view as valid and important). The researcher encouraged them to continue to talk about this with adults they trust. They stated that they would they feel comfortable bringing this up with their school counsellor. The researcher went over the resource hand-out with them, pointing out those resources that might be of particular use to them.

Grade 12 focus groups. The grade 12 focus groups were very dynamic and all participants were engaged, as indicated by easily flowing conversations utilizing input from each of the group members. Not surprisingly, the girls in the grade 12 focus groups were the most sophisticated in their conversations. Their discussions were quite thoughtful, and comments were often in-depth and detailed. Most girls seemed eager to talk, yet they were able to do so without talking over each other. The conversations naturally flowed on their own (e.g., without the researcher asking questions to keep the conversation going), as girls very easily related to each others’ ideas and comments. The conversations were almost completely self-guided, other than the researcher asking standard open questions from the semi-structured interview.

In two of the grade 12 groups, an adult walked in during the discussion. In both cases, the discussion did die down. In the first occurrence, a female drama teacher came in as the

conversation was wrapping up and went into her adjacent private office, so it was of little consequence to their discussion. The second time, a male teacher briefly walked into the room of the focus group to get some papers out an adjacent office and left a few minutes later. The discussion did not seem affected in any way, as the girls did not turn their heads to acknowledge him or to pause from their talking.

Summary. Overall, the vast majority of girls seemed very comfortable and to enjoy participating in the focus groups. The conversations were generally dynamic, spontaneous, open, and free-flowing. Most girls in the groups contributed quite a bit and, although a few girls spoke less and a few girls spoke more, all girls appeared to contribute as much as they desired. Therefore, the conversations seemed to adequately reflect all the girls who volunteered for this experience. Overall, it seemed that most girls wanted to talk and enjoyed voicing their opinions. No group appeared unduly influenced by the presence, talkativeness, or silence of others. Nothing stood out as being a red flag that might have biased the focus group discussions or invalidated the conclusions. The dynamic, friendly, comfortable, and free-flowing conversations, in which nearly all participants engaged, suggests that the thematic results are a valid representation of the full range of participants opinions.

Thematic Analysis Results

The thematic results will now be presented in detail, utilizing quotations as evidence. A key to the transcription codes used when presenting specific quotes appears next.

Key of Transcription Codes

1. **Bold:** said very loudly, with extra enthusiasm and excitement (e.g., yelling)
2. <u>Underlined:</u> statements said at the same time by multiple participants
3. (.): used to denote a short pause (<5 seconds)

4. (...): used to denote a longer pause (5-10 seconds)
5. "Aaaaaand": repeated letters used to denote a word that was given lots of emphasis and extended in length when said
6. (in quotations): laughter, sighing, eye-rolling, hand gestures and other non-verbal body movements used by girls
7. 1-9: a number comes to the left of each quotation to identify the girl in group who said it
8. M: Used to show this was a question asked by the group moderator

Detailed Thematic Analysis Results

Domain 1: Girls Reaction to Sexualised Girl Media

Are girls exposed often to this sexualised media? How aware of it are they? Girls routinely see media sexualising girls and young women. They are very aware of being immersed in it every day. This theme, evident across grades and groups, was reflected by the large number of sexualised female media examples girls spontaneously spoke about in the focus groups (e.g., music videos, magazines, movies, television, internet). When these examples were brought up, it was clear that the girls were very aware of them from the dynamism of the conversation that followed and the shared recollection of this media. There was routinely a high level of excitement and agreement, across groups and between girls, when talking about this inundation. For example, in a grade 6 group, the following conversation occurred, during which girls excitedly and spontaneously brought up multiple media examples from their everyday lives:

5 Yeah, like the show Sixteen and Pregnant is promoting that.

2 Yeah, and like **How to Look Good Naked Canada!**

8 <u>Yeah!</u>

5 <u>Yeah!</u>

3 Like it is about a boy and he just like takes random pictures of girls and the girls are all like **"I don't look good naked!"** And I just think to myself he is just on that show so that he can <u>see.</u>

All girls: (Laugh)

2 **Naked girls!**

4 Yeah.

6 And they are like posing naked.

1 And then he is like (.) you look soooo good and she is like **really?!**

2 Yeah, and I was watching this show (.) and it was like Americas Got Talent (.) and there was like a commercial and these people were putting their hands down their shirts and the people like took off their bra (.) and then they went like this (simulates someone spreading their breasts apart).

8 Ugh.

3 I saw that too (.) yeah just like took her bra off and showed her breasts.

4, 7 Yeah.

5 Yeah, it was on a commercial so, yeah, it is everywhere.

3 Yeah.

4 **Yeah**

1Yeah, I see teenagers and girls acting like that with boys.

5 Yeah.

As another example, the following discussion occurred in one grade 12 group, indicating girls are very exposed to and aware of this media everyday:

M: Do you see images of girls and women like that a lot?

7 Yeah.

6 Yes.

5 It's everywhere.

6 Yeah, it is everywhere.

4 Well, yes, but I (.) like I don't try to watch this kind of stuff.

3 Well (.) yeah, especially in the media. It is like in TV shows and stuff (.) pretty much in anything you watch or look at (.) ads.

2 Like commercials, everything.

1 Yeah.

3 Yeah.

7 Glee.

All girls: (laugh)

What do girls notice about this media? Girls across grades and groups reported a number of key characteristics they find salient about this media: (a) it is targeting girls (and in particular young girls); (b) it's getting worse (i.e., more degrading); (c) it is promoting not just sex, but a pornographic, promiscuous, and casual form of sex; (d) it is related to sexism/ inequality; (e) the females are naked/wearing little clothing; (f) this sexualised representation is the only female representation they see in the media (i.e., this female representation is over-represented in the media); (g) the females are skinny; (h) the female images have been altered/changed; and (i) the sexualised image has nothing to do with what is being sold. Supporting evidence for each characteristic is presented next.

Targeting (young) girls. Girls consistently mentioned that the media appears to be either showing girls or targeting girls (e.g., with images that would be liked by children, such as pastel colours and presenting toys and dolls) and often young girls. Girls generally had a lot of passion about this, exemplified by their exclamation, the amount of times this came up in their conversations, the large number of girls who commented, and the depth and breadth of discussion that this topic generated. Girls' discussions repeatedly centred on how they disliked

this and felt it is wrong, as well as how worried and/or bad they feel for girls younger than themselves being exposed to this media. For example, in one grade 6 group a participant said:

2 Can I show you something about how screwed up something is on the internet? It is like seven year old girls dancing like they are having sex on the internet (.) It is **so wrong!"**

In a grade 9 group the following exchange took place, in which participants indicated that they see girls acting in a sexualised way in the media. Moreover, they think this depiction is getting worse and that younger girls are being depicted:

M: Do you ever see girls acting like that? [acting sexualised in the media]

All girls: **yeeeeeeeeeeeeeess (laughter)**

M: Yeah, at your age (.) or.

All girls: **yeeeeeeeeesss!**

1 **At our age!**

3 And younger.

4 And younger.

1 I think it is changing (.) I don't think it has always been like that.

2 I think it is getting worse and worse.

3 And younger and younger.

Likewise, grade 12 girls indicated their awareness that media is specifically targeting and sexualising young girls:

7 Yeah, like California girls?? **They are in Candyland!**

6 Like, I didn't know that California Girls was in Candyland.

2 And like (.) I understand that like sex sells (.) like I won't deny that but like (.) the context (.) like there is a relativity, you know, like you could make California sexy without going to that extreme.

1 Without having cupcakes on your boobs.

All girls: (laugh and nod).

6 And it is for sure like that so that they can target the young girls (.) like the candy and the bright colours (.) it is totally to appeal to younger girls.

4 Yeah like **candy, candy.**

7 And Candyland is a game that you play when you are like (.) **little.**

3 Actually I think they do target young girls which is just **terrible**!

5 But like, that is their demographic (.) like (.) that is who they want to start selling to (.) to **capture** them.

1 And like when you are like that age (.) like I fell in love with Britney Spears when I was little and like for my whole entire life I am going to like Britney Spears because I did love her when I was little.

7 Yeah, and like the Spice Girls.

2 Yeah, me too. Like you will like the Spice Girls.

6 Forever because you liked them when you were little.

1 Yeah, and like I would for sure go to a Spice Girls concert now.

3 And, like for sure if they were to come back (.) I agree I would be the first person to go buy it.

7 Yeah, like, I bought way more cds when I was a little kid than what I do now right.

5 Yeah, (.) so it is like making them into these lifelong customers (.) right? (.) Like get them hooked while they are young.

1 Like drug dealers.

Getting worse. As was evident from the previous examples, girls in grade 9 and 12 perceived that the level of sexualisation is getting worse, using phrases such as "more vicious," "more extreme," and "more nakedness" in their discussions. Girls in grade 6 groups used fewer

"more" labels, perhaps because they haven't been exposed as long to this media as the older adolescents and, thus, are unable to draw such comparisons. For example, in one grade 9 group, it was said:

4 And like Britney Spears too, (.) like to begin with she did have like lower pants and she did show skin (.) but it looked liked nice (.) it didn't look like she was trying so hard to (.) but now it is like she is so much worse (.). Like she is like naked.

2 Yeah , like it seems like it is getting worse (.) it seems like now they are trying to show too much.

4 Yeah, like I wouldn't go to a club or to anything looking like that one (.). Like it seems like just anything goes now.

Likewise, in a grade 12 group the following discussion occurred:

M: Do you think that girls and women are being told that it is a cultural ideal for us to be and act sexy?

All girls: Yeah/yes/(nods).

2 Yeah, all the time.

3 Yes, and it is getting worse.

4 (Nods) It **is** getting worse.

5 Yeah like if you saw stuff from like the 70s (.) it is progressively getting more (.) I don't know (.) **slutty!**

All girls: (giggle).

6 More provocative.

3 Right.

Promoting degrading/shallow/pornographic/promiscuous sex. Girls noticed that this media isn't just about sex. Rather, it promotes a specific type of sexuality that is casual, promiscuous, pornographic, and degrading. Girls routinely, across grades and groups, referred to

the sexualised females with terms such as “whore,” “skanky,” and “slutty.” As an example, girls in one grade 6 group said the following:

1 Yeah, it totally looks like they are getting in the mood.

5 Yeah, this totally shows them getting into the mood.

7 Yeah, it’s like it just makes boys want to have sex.

5 Sex.

6 Sex.

1, 4 **Yeah!**

M: So you think these videos and ads have a lot to do with sex?

All girls: **Yes!**

3 Yeah, but if that wasn’ t invented, we wouldn’t be here right now

2 Nobody inveeeeeeented sex.

All girls: (laugh).

M: Do you think that is what sex is?

1 No.

6 No.

3 No, this is pornography.

1, 6, 7, 8 (nodding).

1 It’s making people want to have sex I think.

2 It’s like inventing **how** people want to have sex.

Again, grade 12 groups made many similar comments:

2 Yeah, but the songs are also so subjective. Like the lyrics are also terrible (.) all about promoting sex **and lots of it.**

1 Yeah, like the Rhianna one.

2 **Yeah!** Like the lyrics too (.) like is he big enough? Like **whoa!** It is sending a **terrible** message to girls about sex and how to be.

3 It is like **Playboy.**

4 Yeah and like then she checks his pants.

5 **Yeah!** And then it is like if you didn't know what she was talking about **now** you do.

All girls: (laugh).

5 You know like.

7 Yeah, and like the Lady Gaga video (.) like if you watch the rest of the video she is like not only having sexual relations but like in the court yard she is like just hooking up with a girl and stuff.

5 Yeah, (.) like it makes sex look like it is **just nothing** like it is just.

6 Yeah, and like it makes (.) like guys think it is hot when like two girls make out (.) like they are like **make out!**

Related to sexism and inequality. The theme that this sexualised media is sexist came up in all the girls' group discussions. They argued this media was sexist because it treats women and girls as objects who are only there to entertain boys and men. For example, the following discussion took place in one grade 6 group:

1 Yeah, like haven't you ever noticed that in all the guys singer videos it's **always** just a bunch of naked girls.

2 Yup, and they are all just wearing like jean bras, jean undies like some people call them shorts but really it's like nooo you are wearing one pair of real underwear and another pair of denim underwear and dancing around the guys who want them.

3, 5, 7, 8 (nodding).

2 Yeah.

3 **Yup,** allllllll about the guys.

M: So in the guy videos you notice that it is just a bunch of almost naked women.

All girls: **Yeeees.**

1 **Yeah, but in the girl videos it is still just a bunch of naked girls.**

5 Yes, well (.) in the video it had everything to do with the boys.

1 Like there was always like a guy right there **(.) right** (.) watching.

5 Sometimes I think that when you see these ways girls are shown it is offensive and it kinda makes me mad (.) like why do they have to show it like that?

2 Yeah, it's like they are being offensive to girls and women (.) like all you are is a boob.

8 Just **boobs boobs boobs.**

Another example, from a grade 12 group, went as follows:

7 It is weird. Because (.) there was the whole equality movement (.) you know with women being treated equal and getting jobs and now it is like.

3 It's like inequality is being promoted.

At the extreme, girls across grades pointed out that this sexism both indicates and promotes sexual violence and sexual harassment. The following was discussed in one grade 12 group:

4 I think that abuse is being portrayed differently now in the media (.) because like Miley Cyrus was in a cage and Lady Gaga in prison and so on so it is like (.) making it acceptable to be abused.

7 Yeah.

4 I don't know if that make sense.

2 No, I agree it makes sense.

3 Yeah.

6 Yeah.

1 Yeah.

M: You guys agree?

2 Yeah.

3 Yeah.

2 I think it makes it seem more normal (.) like it is normal.

M: So like it is normal, it is okay.

2Yeah.

6 Like, oh there is nothing wrong with my relationship.

4 Yeah, (.) or even if a girl like jokes about (.) (laughs) like I don't even know how to put this like oh (laughs).

(all other girls laugh too).

4 Like what I was going to say was oh, I want to be put in a cage (.) like if a girl would even joke about that then the boyfriend would probably be like "o…oh (.) she probably wants to make me a sandwich too" and you know (.) do more things for me.

Naked/scantily clad. Girls also noticed the nakedness/lack of clothing worn by the media females. In their discussions, girls generally expressed disapproval of girls being so scantily clad and said they thought they should be wearing more clothing. For example, one grade 12 group stated:

M: So first of all (.) before I ask any questions (.) any general comments?

4 It is disappointing.

All others: (nod).

3 They don't leave much to the imagination.

1 Noo!

5 Noo!

2 Yeah, like the girls and women it's like they were wearing so little.

3 Like very little clothing.

1 Yeah.

3 Yeah.

6 Yeah!

It should be noted that, despite this, girls still felt pressured to emulate this way of dressing, even if they didn't necessarily agree with it, due to the message that sexualised females are considered by others to be "perfect" and "attractive." In addition, girls believed that boys like and expect such images. This will be addressed in detail in the section regarding why girls imitate this media.

This is the only female media representation (i.e., the sexualised female is over-represented in the media). Girls also routinely mentioned that this is almost the only female representation they see in the media (or related arenas, such as fashion). Further, they mentioned there are no other alternatives or options for clothing styles that are considered attractive. One grade 6 group stated:

4 Yeah, because like they all (.) like if there is one designer (.) like they all look the same (.) and then all other designers make the same look and then everyone looks the same.

3 Yeah, and like it is like they are saying **only** girls that look like thiiiis (.) are pretty.

5 Yeah, like you have to be put together.

Similarly, in one grade 9 group it was stated:

4 Yeah, and it is like **all we see** is these.

Another example from a grade 12 group:

1 And another thing (.) a holiday that is probably pretty bad is probably Halloween. I went to Party Stuff to find a costume this year and the only costume I liked (.) it was literally just below my butt and a (.) I (.) felt extremely inappropriate wearing it (.) and I went to get a larger size and it only (.) it only got bigger up to but it didn't get bigger at the bottom.

3 Yeah, it is like there is no options out there.

5 Yeah, like there isn't maybe like.

4 Appropriate costumes you can wear.

3 It's like yeah (.) here (.) be a slut.

1 (Laughing) Yeah, like a saw a **sexy nun! It was bad!**

All girls: (laugh).

Notice altered /changed. Girls in all grades and groups were aware that these female images have been altered (i.e., digitized) and are not real. For example, one grade 6 group said:

2 Yeah because they **doooo** change how people look (.). Like they can take a picture of your face and put it on someone else's body.

3 Yeah, and they can also make it so (.) they can change the way your face looks.

4 Yeah, because last year we were learning family life and our teacher showed us this video and someone took a picture of someone and they were changing her face and stuff.

All girls: **Yeah.**

3 **And she was perfectly fine!!!** She looked fine without being all changed.

4 Yeah, and (.) like every blemish (.) if the nose it too short (.) they'll make it longer.

2 And if their eyes are too smaller they'll make them bigger.

1 Yeah, and like in (.) Lady Gaga (.) Bad Romance (.) they make her eyes bigger (.) when she is in the tub.

2,5,7 **Yeah.**

Another grade 9 group said:

2 The way they make the girls look (.) like it doesn't look real.

1 Yeah, it looks fake.

2 **They look like barbies!**

1 Yeah.

2 Yeah.

M: They look fake? Do you think they are altering their appearances?

1 **Oh yeah!**

2 Yeah.

3 Yeah.

4 Yeah, like for celebrities (.) pretty much all of them have been altered or changed their bodies.

M: What do you mean altered?

1 Well (.) like I know in photos they make them look really skinny.

2 Yeah.

1 And they change (.) get rid of all their little blemishes.

3 Yeah.

1 And their eye colour.

4 Yeah.

2 Yeah, (.) and then adding like tons of makeup to make them even more perfect with (.) like the computer and stuff.

1 So they are not representing real women.

M: Do you notice that a lot?

All girls **Yeah!**

1 Yeah, they are not really real.

Thin. Girls across all grades and groups repeatedly mentioned that they noticed that the media females were "thin" or "skinny." The following from a grade 9 group is only one of many examples that could be listed:

M: Ok, anything else anyone would like to say before I ask some questions for you to all discuss?

4 I think they are all (.) really skinny.

5 Like fit (.) like **really** fit (.) like.

6 Well (.) that is debatable.

5 Well, (.) yeah, (.) like I mean (.) they are not healthy (.) but they.

1 They look like they haven't eaten in like **a month.**

9 Yeah.

Some other girls: (laugh).

3 Well, clearly they are not healthy if they are starving themselves (.) but they look like they try (.) lots to keep their bodies looking that way.

7 Maybe some of them are naturally like that (.) like have high metabolisms (.) that sort of thing.

1 I don't think most of them are naturally like that.

Other girls: (nod their head in agreement with 1's statement).

Notice the sexualised image has nothing to do with what is being sold. Girls in each grade pointed out that the sexualised image was unrelated to the product or video. In one grade 6 group the girls mentioned:

4 Yeah, (.) like (.) I don't understand (.) I think (.) if it is supposed to be an ad for jeans (.) then why do you need a skanky shirt?

1 Yeah.

6 Yeah.

M: So it is a jeans advertisement, but it's not really about jeans?

4 Yeah, it's stupid.

3 **Mmm-hmmm.**

5 Hmmm-mmm, **yeah!**

3 **Stupid**!

M: And you think it is stupid?

2 Yeah.

4 Yeah.

6 Yeah.

Later, in the same group, the girls stated:

2 Well (.) it is supposed to be selling a purse, so why does she need to be naked ??

5 Yeah.

6 **Yeaaahh!**

1 Yeah (.) like it doesn't make **any sense!**

3It's for a **purse?!** What is she **thinking**?

Discussing a music video, a grade 12 girl remarked:

1 And also I'd like to say like the Lady Gaga video (.) I don't see what that (.) how she is dancing and stuff (.) has to do even with the song (.) it makes no sense why they have to show her like that.

Other themes regarding appearance. Lastly, girls noticed two further themes, but to a lesser extent and with less dynamism, than the previously mentioned themes, namely (a) that the media females were wearing lots of makeup and using lots of beauty products and (b) that the media models were predominantly Caucasian and tanned. These characteristics were mentioned the most predominantly by the grade 6 groups and, to a lesser extent, by the grade 9 and 12 groups. These topics came up often when girls were discussing some of the other themes noted above (e.g., thinness, being altered). As one example from a grade 6 group, related to the images being primarily Caucasian and tanned:

4 Yeah, and like you don't really see people with darker skin.

3, 5, 6 (nod).

1 Yeah, that is true.

4 Well, Rihanna has darker skin.

6 Yeah, that is true (.) but like she is the only one main singer.

3 Yeah, like when I look at these ads I don't see any dark skinned people.

2 Oh, yeah, except for this one (points out an ad).

5 Like overall they are all Caucasian (.) or like tanned.

All girls: Yeah.

6 (laughs) Like they are **all** tanned (.) like on reality TV shows like Jersey Shore.

All girls: (laugh).

Concerning media females wearing lots of make-up, a grade 12 group observed:

4 Yeah, like I think a lot of the girls in the pictures are like ugly (.) well not ugly but they look so altered (.) like they almost look misshaped because of how airbrushed they are and everything.

2, 3 (nod in agreement)

2 **Yeah!**

M: You think most of these ads are airbrushed?

All girls: **Yeah!**

1 Yeah, like this girl (.) she doesn't necessarily have big fake boobs but she is wearing so much make-up (.). Even if she looked good before they would still like change her.

How does viewing sexualised media make girls feel? Girls in each focus group, across grades, reported that viewing sexualised girls in the media makes them feel negatively about themselves. Words used repeatedly included "uncomfortable," "negative," "bad, " unconfident," "upset," "bothered," "depressed," "disappointed," and others related to "low self-esteem." Girls strongly endorsed this theme, as evidenced by their high level of emotion and excitement, as well as the high proportion of girls within each group who stated their agreement. For example, in one grade 9 group, when I asked the girls how viewing this media makes them feel, nearly all

girls in the group yelled “Negative!” in unison, with passion and conviction. This reaction was representative of all groups.

Self-comparison processes and interpretation of media messages. Girls routinely said that viewing this media makes them feel “bad” about themselves because they compare themselves to the media. Such comparisons make girls feel negative for a few related reasons. The first reason is that they conclude that they do not look or act the same and, therefore they must not be attractive. Recall that girls decode the message that only a sexualised female image is culturally ideal. This phenomenon will be discussed in more detail in the section regarding why girls imitate this media.

For example, one grade 6 group said the following:

M: So do you think that when girls see images like this it makes them feel positive or negative about themselves?

1,2,3,4,7 **Negative!**

5 Probably negative.

3,4 Yeah.

M: And why is that?

1 Because they **want** to look like that.

2 Because they don’t look like that.

6 Because it makes them feel like you must be ugly without **all** that make-up.

3,4 Yeah.

M: So, am I hearing you (.) you think it makes girls mostly feel bad about themselves because they want to look like that too (.) and these girls have all this makeup on (.) and the girls think they don’t look like that?

4 Yeah, like **that iiiis what you think!**

A grade 12 group observed:

1 “I think that younger girls or even girls our age (.) they look at the pictures and they think (.) **wow she is thin** or **wow she (.) has a nice tan** or whatever (laughs) or bigger breasts or something like that (.) and then you look at yourself and (.) you don’t look the same, and you think (.) **wow**. (.) I kinda feel bad about myself now. And then I think there are people who go to extremes to look like that.

In these examples, many girls reported that this comparison process makes them feel “bad” because they *do* want to look like the media females, but realize that they don’t resemble/ measure up to that image.

Conversely, some girls said that such comparisons make them feel bad even if they *don’t* want to look or act like the media females (e.g., they don’t desire to be sexual or dress with little clothing) because they still interpret the media as saying that is how they are supposed to look and/or act. For example, in a grade 9 group, the following exchange took place:

3: Sometimes I think maybe they are sometimes just trying to be funny (.) like this one (.) obviously her head is not that big compared to her body (.) so maybe sometimes they aren’t always trying to get across a bad message (.) but I think sometimes it still does (.) like I try not to take these too seriously (.) but then you think about it (.) and you are like (.) yeah you **do** feel bad.

6: But then you see pictures in ads like this one (.) and it is like (.) you think like (.) **is that how I am supposed to look?!**

1: Yeah it bothers me.

M: Well what do you think? Do you think they are saying that is how we are supposed to look?

6 Well, (.) yeah (.). But like some of these (.) like I don’t exactly want shirts that are going to show off so much skin.

4: Or like this one (.) she is liked naked and I don’t want to be like that.

It is offensive to females. Another reason girls gave, across grades and groups, for why viewing this media makes them feel bad is because it makes girls look “useless” and “as just objects,” which are related to sexism. The girls indicated that the sexist message, in and of itself,

upsets them, as they understand this reflects their devalued social position. For example, one grade 6 group discussed the following:

2 Yeah, and it makes you feel bad (.) well (.) maybe not (.) but some girls feel bad because they are advertising for the boys and they make the girls look useless.

All girls: (nod).

1 **Yeah!**

3 **Yes!**

5 Yeah, like during the Katie Perry one. Katie Perry and the other girls are all just dancing for Snoop Dogg.

1 It's like they are making the ads and videos as if it is all about boys and men, and the girls are just there.

2 **To entertain them!**

M: Entertain them?

All girls: **Yeah** (laughing)!

M: How does that make you girls feel?

1 Ugh.

2 Not good.

3 Not good.

4 Not good.

5,6,8 (shaking heads no, not good).

Likewise, one grade 12 group said the following:

5 It sort of bothers me that women are represented like that.

3 Kinda (.) because it bothers me that then other people expect that of you.

7 It is kinda degrading.

4 It is upsetting that we've grown so accustomed to seeing women and girls being treated and shown like that (.) it wasn't always like that.

6 It's upsetting because girls are just treated like they are objects as opposed to real people.

Although overall the majority of girls, across groups and grades, indicated that they felt this media makes them feel negative/bad, some girls pointed out that a small minority of girls might have a positive reaction because they do look like the media models (i.e., it is an ego boost). Following a different training of thought, one grade 12 girl mentioned that some girls might compare themselves to these media models and feel good because they are superior to these females (i.e., they have higher priorities for themselves than being sexy and attractive). How often this occurs relative to comparisons causing girls to feel inferior is unknown.

Domain 2. Girls' Imitation of Sexualised Media

Girls across groups and grades agreed that sexualised media does influence girls to imitate it. Overall, there was strong agreement that viewing this media influences girls to change how they look. Again, this was indicated by the strong emotion and tone used by girls, as well as by nearly all participants indicating their agreement. More specifically, the researcher asked girls if they thought that viewing this media influences them to change how they look, nearly all girls in unison (generally quickly, loudly and enthusiastically) said **"Yes!"** or "**Yeah!"** They stated the following as the major mechanisms by which girls attempt to change how they look: (a) eating disorders and dieting; (b) plastic surgery; (c) hair, makeup, and clothing style. Each of these will be discussed in turn.

Eating disorders and dieting. This category was mentioned most often in all groups. Girls reported that they notice many things about the sexualised females including their large breasts, exposure of their body, and lack of clothing, but their thinness is the biggest influence on

girls' desire to change their bodies, primarily through dieting. In their discussion, girls routinely mentioned eating disorders. For example, one grade 6 group said the following:

3 And that is why girls try to change how they look.

5 Yeah, and like eating disorders.

M: Eating disorders? Do you think that happens a lot?

All girls: **Yeah!**

6 Yes, and not just eating disorders but diets and stuff like that.

1 Yeah, like you see the video and you think maybe I can change how I look.

Additionally, a grade 9 group said:

5 That is why people go (.) and (.) like that is why they are bulimic (.) and anorexic and stuff.

8 (nods) Yeah, I agree.

2 Or diets.

9 That don't work.

2 Yeah.

4 Yeah (nods).

In grade 12 groups, similar discussions:

M: Ok. So how do you think the media influences girls and women?

1 Like eating disorders, low self-esteem.

5 Well, lots of people aren't built skinny (.) some people do have just more meat on them naturally and I think that does cause eating disorders (.) I am sure that is really common.

Plastic surgery. The second theme that came up across groups is that this media makes girls and women want to get plastic surgery to alter their bodies. Girls stated that this media is normalizing getting plastic surgery as a way to look like the media models. Moreover, they are

aware of many of media females having plastic surgery. For example, one grade 6 group

discussed the following:

M: To what extent do you think images of girls like this makes girls want to change how you look?

1 I think it does.

8 Plastic surgery.

3 Plastic surgery!

2 Plastic surgery.

3 Yeah, like there is this celebrity I can't remember her name but I think her name is Heidi. She has such massive breast surgery that her boobs were so big and then she was in this bathing suit and the bathing suit was like hanging on for **dear life!**

M: So you think that there are a lot of girls out there who are getting surgery to get bigger breasts?

8 And bigger butts and smaller noses and smaller waists.

All girls: (nodding)

2 Yeah, but some girls want to have smaller breasts (.) like to be skinny (.) I think I would want small breasts.

5 Yeah, it's like you need to make you body different with surgery.

M: So you are saying that it seems like girls and women watch this and then want to change their bodies (.) make them (.) not real.

All girls: (nod heads yes)

Similarly, a grade 9 group said:

3 Yeah, and like she and everyone has had so much plastic surgery for their boobage (laughs) [looks at the girl who first used the word 'boobage' earlier in the group, who laughs too].

1 Yeah, I think her boobs are fake.

2 Yeah I think it is definately influencing people to get plastic surgery and like boob jobs.

Hair, make-up, clothing. Girls across groups and grades also stated that watching sexualised female media influences them to alter their hair, make-up (e.g., wear more of it), and clothes to imitate the style of the media females (e.g., try to look sexy via clothing that is tight or shows off their bodies). However, overall this topic wasn't as passionately discussed as the eating disorders/dieting and plastic surgery topics. Girls in grades 6 and 9 brought up hair, make-up and clothing more so than did girls in grade 12. When girls in grade 12 brought up these topics, they indicated that they notice younger girls being influenced this way moreso than themselves. Girls in grade 12 suggested this was because hair, makeup, and clothing might be methods more available to younger girls to be like media females than other ways more available to older girls (e.g., being sexual, sexual activity, having large breasts). For example, in one grade 12 group, the following discussion ensued:

3 I think some of your models are the popular girls and I think that even in grade 6 the popular girls are the pretty girls <u>(all other girls nod).</u>

3 **Right!** (.) and so you maybe are not (.) but you try to do what you can to alter yourself to look more like that (.) and so maybe what you do is try to dress pretty (.) and the media is like here dress like this (.) and that will make you look pretty.

4 Yeah, (.) like if you don't think you have the natural attributes to be pretty you will do what you can to manipulate how you look to look more like that standard and at that age (.) in grade 6 (.) you have clothes and style .

Sexualised behaviour with boys. Across groups and grades, girls agreed that viewing sexualised media influences them to act/behave sexually with boys because it normalizes and promotes this behavior for adolescent girls. As indicated above, there might be some differences by grade in the degree to which this influences sexual behavior. For example, Grade 6 girls indicated that this media influenced the sexualised behavior of older girls moreso than girls in their grade. They added that most girls in grade 6 are not yet trying to have sex with boys. To illustrate, one grade 6 group stated:

M: Okay so what do you think? (.) Do you think that this type of media portrayals of girls and women influences girls your age's behaviour with boys (.)? How girls act with boys?

1 **Sexual!**

4 **Sexual!**

5 Yeah, but I think far more so with older girls than us (.) like in junior high and high school maybe (.) far more.

3 Yeah, like I don't go up to boys and try to hump them.

8 The media is influencing this (.) because they see people having sex all the time.

1 **Yes!**

5 **Exactly!**

8 For example **like this!** (holds up ad)

3 **Yeah, like ads like this!** (holds up another ad)

7 This **screams** sex. (looking at ad)

Similarly, another 6th grade group stated:

M: Do you think these images influence how girls think they should act or how they act with boys?

All girls: **Yeah/ yes!**

M: How so?

1 Well, like when they are taking their clothes off.

2 And like getting naked.

6 And like TV shows promote that.

5 Like sex.

All girls: Yeah.

Grade 9 group discussions were consistent with this. For example, the following dialogue took place in a grade 9 group:

M: Like what? [in response to a discussion occurring in which girls were stating that the media influenced girls sexual behaviour with boys]

(Girls all laugh and look at each other uncomfortably. They pause as if they don't know how to respond)

M: Do you think 9th graders are having sex?

All girls: Yeah/ (nod).

M: Do you think these kinds of images influence girls to have sex younger?

1 Yeah, (.) because like in the videos (.) it is all about sex (.) like music videos especially (.) they always have boys and girls together (.) **having fun!** (makes eyes and body movements to indicate sex).

All girls: (laugh)

3 yeah like there is like an orgy scene in the Britney Spears video.

All girls: (laugh).

2 Yeah, that is what it looks like.

Likewise, girls in grade 12 groups pointed out that the media normalize this sexualised behavior. Girls in grade 12 mentioned that sexualised media influences girls younger than themselves to behave and act sexual, even more than it did when they were that age. For example, the following was stated in one grade 12 group:

1 Yeah, so it is now normalized now to have a slutty stage.

6 Yeah, and that is **not** normal.

3 Yeah, that is not something you should want or that you or others should be expecting.

2 But it seems like it is that way now.

1 Like I can see you know (.) you grow up and develop more sexually and like.

7 Yeah, but like that is **different** from a slutty stage.

All girls: (nod)/ Yeah/yes.

5 Yeah, like it is one thing as a natural progression of a long term relationship but like.

All girls: Yeah/yes.

5 Like for there to be a normal thing for there to be a slutty stage in middle school, like **no.**

7 You should be focused on building relationships.

All girls: Yeah/yes.

1 Yeah, and like following up on the slutty thing (.) with all the sex stuff that there is being promoted in the media (.) I know a guy who is **13** and just got his **13 year old girlfriend pregnant! 13!** Like how are they going to support a child?

5 **Oh my!**

4 **Oh my god!**

1 I **didn't even know what sex meant when I was.**

All girls: (laughing and nodding).

Similarly, another grade 12 group stated:

M: So what do you think (.) do you think that when teenage girls see images of girls and women looking like this in the media it influences us to think that is how they should look or act as well?

All girls: (nod) /Yeah /yes/ for sure.

M: Can you describe that to me? Give me some examples of it?

6 Like the generations younger than us (.) it seems like they are growing up so fast (.) like they are getting wasted on Friday nights and I'm like **you are only 12 years old!**

1 Yeah.

2 Yup.

4 **Are you serious?!**

M: So you think girls are growing up faster because of this media exposure?

5 Yeah! And like even the 9th graders at school (.) they look like how I look now (.) like they look older.

3 **Okay then! It's not just me then!** I feel like we grew up later than younger girls are today.

All girls: (lots of nods of agreement)

1 Yeah.

4 Yeah.

7 Yes.

4 Yeah, I think maybe, but for me (.) I don't know (.) I grew up way faster (.) like I found a picture of me in grade 6 or so and I'm like yeah [she makes movement to depict her being sexy] and I've got boobs and everything.

M: So for some of you it seems like you were already growing up fast but for others it seems like younger girls than you today are growing up even faster still?

All girls: (nod)/Yeah.

M: So you are seeing a trend towards grade 9 girls getting wasted and acting like (.) more like adults?

4 **And like doing stuff!** Like if you heard what some of the girls at our school do!

M: Like what? Can you elaborate without breaking anyone's privacy, giving names?

4 **Ugh! (laughing)**

7 Like lots of girls are having sex.

5 Okay, like for example (.) girls will text guys messages saying I'm going to do this to you and I've never even talked to you before (.) but I'm going to do this.

3 Yeah, that sort of thing happens.

4 Yeah.

2 It's like that is how girls show they are confident but (.) it's like way too over-confident.

3 Yeah, like girls are not shy at aaaaallll.

6 Like they are willing to give themselves entirely away (.) they are willing to give themselves up to just anyone.

4 I know a girl (.) it was either last year or the year before and she is two years younger than me (.) so I don't know if she was in grade 8 or 9 (.) but she had like a five-some.

2 **Oh my goooooodd!**

5 Yeah, like I didn't even think about that kind of stuff in like junior high.

M: Okay, so what I hear you all saying is that, yes, teenagers are having sex but it's not just sex but a certain type of sex that is being portrayed (.) that they are seeing.

1 Yeah, (.) it's more (.) it's like it is more than just having sex with your boyfriend. (.) Like I think that is okay (.) it's not a big deal.

2 Yeah.

3 Yeah.

1 When its just two people but its **bigger** than that (.) like there are people doing it with **everyone** like girls who have already slept with like (.) 10 different people.

6 Yeah.

2 Yeah.

3 Yeah, like there are people who are like that for sure.

2 And then they go and broadcast it to everyone and it's like **god just keep it to yourself!**

4 Yeah, like they do it to get their social status up.

7, 5, 3 Yeah.

7 Yeah, like there are people at parties just having random sex.

3 Yeah, like there will be people at parties having sex.

6 Yeah, like they'll be hooking up in a closet.

All girls: (nod)/ Yes/yeah.

5 Yeah, that is right.

M: And that increases their social status? They think it increases their social status?

3 Well, yeah, because everyone talks about it.

2 Yeah, because people talk about them.

4 Yeah, like **e-v-e-r-y-one** [says slowly and enunciates] talks about it.

Girls see their peers imitating sexualised media. As can be seen from the above quotes, girls routinely stated that they see girls (friends, peers, etc.) imitating sexualised media. Girls' discussions further indicated that they perceived increasingly younger girls doing the same. A grade 6 group stated the following:

M: have you seen other girls your age acting like this?

All girls: **Yes!/yeah!**

M: Do you have anything to say about this?

2 Um (.) yeah (.) like last year there was a girl who like always dressed skanky (.) like in gym class she would wear a shirt up to there (gestures to her chest) and she would always dye her hair.

1 Yeah, I see teenagers and girls acting like that with boys.

5 Yeah.

Likewise, grade 9 girls had similar discussions:

M: Have you seen girls your age acting like that with boys?

All girls: **Yes!!**

2 Yeah, **definitely!**

3 **Everywhere!**

All girls: (Laugh)/(nods)

1 They act like that **everywhere!**

4 **Even at school!**

2 Yeah, last year there was a lot of girls here who acted like that.

3 Yeah, (.) like the grade 9s.

1 Like, yeah, they were doing **stuff.**

Similarly, Grade 12 girls mentioned seeing girls acting like the sexualised media:

M: So we have touched on this already but do you think (.) or have you seen in this school or other schools that the media does influence girls' behaviour?

2 **Yes!**

3 **Yes!**

All girls: (Lots of nodding)

6 Yeah, for sure.

M: So do you see girls acting or imitating these behaviours like in ads and the videos?

All girls: **Yes!**

1 Yes, but especially when you are even younger (.) like for example the grade 9s. Like everyone kinda hates them and they are very much buying into this and I think they are trying to get attention and they are trying to get respect (.) maybe from older people.

Why Girls Imitate Sexualised Media

Girls across grades and groups generally responded that this media influences girls and that girls imitate it. Girls do so because they (a) decode as true positive messages associated with this media; (b) believe that the females in the media are supposed to be role models and worthy of emulation; and (c) are so highly exposed to such media that it drives them to read/focus/dwell on these media messages and, in turn, want to conform. Each of these influences will be discussed in turn, beginning with decoding as true positive messages associated with this media.

Decoding Positive Media Messages

Sexualised females represent cultural attractiveness. As stated before, girls reported decoding a number of positive messages associated with sexualised females. First, girls receive the message that these media females are considered attractive and ideal (i.e., "perfect") by our culture/society. They imitate these models (i.e., try to look more like them) because they desire to be considered attractive too. Girls also stated that they interpret the sexualised female as being the *only* image that is attractive and acceptable. Moreover, girls noted the implied message that it

is *normal* and *desirable* for them to change to look like this too (i.e., it is expected of them). For example, a grade 6 group stated:

4 It is like they are trying to tell you what is perfect (.) that you can never get to that (.) but there is no perfect (.) you know?

5 They are trying to say that this is perfect but there is no perfect.

4 Yes, it is like you have to change yourself to look perfect.

Another grade 6 group mentioned:

3 Yeah, so they see this and think that is how I am supposed to act.

1 Yeah, there is a lot of movies like that too.

M: Movies like that too?

1 Hmm-mmm (.) that say you should act like that.

Yet another grade 6 group observed:

M: (.) Ok, so why do you think that is? Why do you think seeing images like this over and over would make some girls want to change how they act or look?

2 Because they see how pretty they look.

1 (nods). Yeah, like you think, oh (.) I want to be that beautiful (.) I want to look like that.

Grade 9 groups had similar discussions. For example:

6 Yeah, but you always have to compare yourself to it.

M: How so?

1 They try to change how they look so they look better (.) like the people they are seeing.

3 To look as good as that.

6 Yeah, you compare yourself to it and realize you don’t look as good.

Another grade 9 group said:

5 Well, society is so obsessed with the perfect look that it makes lots of girls turn to that.

1Yeah, (.) like (.) the media they put out now is like **tha**t is supposed to be the perfect image (.) but really it is not (.) like there is no such thing as perfection.

8 Like they are saying that is what is perfect.

9 Yeah, and now that is what people are starting to believe.

8 Because people want to look perfect in others eyes.

6 And it is unrealistic but people believe it is true that you are supposed to look like that.

Grade 12 groups cited social comparison pressures as causing girls to imitate. One grade 12 group mentioned:

M: So why is that? [that girls imitate]

5 Yeah, they compare themselves to people they see in the media or they may just compare themselves to other people at school.

3 Some girls look at themselves and they just see something different when they look in the mirror.

1 And then they're like oh (.) I wish I could look like Katy Perry (.) but even I am like oh I wish my butt was bigger.

6 (laughs) Me too.

Similarly, a grade 12 group said:

4 It almost seems like (.) feels like (.) people **expect** you to dress like that because that is how people in the media dress and that is what you see all the time.

Relatedly, girls indicated that even if they didn't necessarily want to look sexualised, the media message was still that they *should* change to look like this, that it is normal to do so. For example, one grade 9 group stated:

7 I don't think lots of girls want to (.) really (.) look like them.

1, 2, 8 3, 4 **Whaaaat!?/ Yes they do! [**<u>all these girls talking at once, agreeing with this sentiment]</u>

5 I don't know if I agree. (gesturing to 7)

1 **Yeah, I think lots dooooo!** (gesturing to 7)

5 [looking at 7]: You may live in your own alternate universe but it is not like that for most girls (.). There are **quite a few people who do want to look like that!**

7 I just think (.) maybe they try to look like that because think they're supposed to but they don't **really** want to.

2, 8, 5 (nod) (agreeing with 7's statement)

To be popular/fit in/be accepted. Girls also reported that they imitate sexualised images because of decoding the media messages that sexualised appearance and behavior is the way for girls to be popular, fit in, and be accepted. They repeatedly argued that girls who imitate this media do so in order to "be popular," "be cool," "get attention," "get friends," "increase social status," " be accepted," and "fit in." This theme was talked about at length and in detail by girls in all focus groups. For example, in regards to "fitting in," one grade 6 group discussed the following:

7 Yeah, girls just act like this in order to fit in.

5 You feel left out and insecure (.) then you are more likely going to try to act like this.

3 Yeah, it is like the same as drugs (.) you want to fit in so you go and do that and it is like nononono.

Similarly, a grade 9 group said:

M: So for the girls that imitate this why do you think they do that?

1 To fit in.

3 Because they think that is what everyone else wants.

A grade 12 group mentioned:

7 And try to fit in with others.

4 Hmm-mmm.

5 Yeah, and like the media is playing a role in dictating what that is.

1 And like you need to do so to like, fit in.

Another grade 12 group observed:

M: Do you see girls imitating these behaviours like in the ads or videos?

All girls: **Yes/yeah!**

M: Why do you think that is?

1: They think it will make you popular

To be liked by boys/get a boyfriend. Girls also stated that they imitated this media in order to be liked by boys. They repeatedly mentioned, in detail and with great enthusiasm, that the media message that boys like girls who look and act in a sexualised manner. For example, in grade 6 the following was mentioned:

4 Yes, but girls always have a choice (.) like girls are choosing to act like that in order to get attention from boys.

1 Yes (.) girls want the attention.

3,5,7,8 (nod)

M: So girls choose to act like this so that they get attention from boys?

6 Yup.

1 Yeah, like Britney Spears.

6 She'll just go like **whoa!** (uses hands to imitate flashing)

1 Yeah, like there is this one girl and she is always showing off her boobs and the boys are like **whhhooooaaa!**

2 So it is to make boys like you.

All girls: **Yeah/yes!**

1 To get attention from guys (...) I think they see the girls in the videos and they want to be like them because the boys find it appealing.

2 They think the boys find it appealing.

Similarly, another grade 6 group stated:

2 Yeah, (.) and they think it impresses the boys.

5 Yeah, they think boys like it.

6 They think it is the only way to get boys.

8That is what boys are expecting of girls.

All girls: **Yeah/yes!**

M: Boys expect that?

3 Well, it makes them think that **all** girls do that!

1, 2, 5, 6 (nodding)

1 **Yeah!**

2 **Yeah!**

M: so what happens if that is not how girls want to act?

1 Then no boys.

All girls: (nod)

This motivation was discussed across all grade 9 groups as well. For example, one grade 9 group said:

M: So why would a girl imitate this?

8 Because you want guys.

3 Yeah (.) you want guys.

Likewise, another grade 9 group mentioned:

M: So why would some girls imitate this?

4 I think it's pretty much just to get guys. Like not all girls will imitate it and act like that but some will and that is why.

3 Yeah, because they think it is what guys like.

Similarly, all the grade 12 groups mentioned attracting boys as a reason. For example:

5 I think that for a lot of girls they are looking for someone to love them and they see all these girls who dress like that in the media and they have got all the boys and they associate (.). I think they associate dressing like that with and acting that certain way with boys (.) which is associated with love (.) you know (.)? Like everyone wants someone to hold them and tell them they love them (.) but like what does pretty **reallllllyyyy** mean that is what the media is dictating.

To be heard, have a voice, express themselves. Girls also said that they imitate sexualised media because taking on a sexualised posture is a way to express themselves, stand out, and have a voice. The following was stated in one grade 12 group:

6 Yeah, I agree and I also think they think, well, if I dress like that (.) well, mom and dad dress like that (.) and people on TV dress like that, and then if I dress like that then I will look older and then other people will take me seriously. Because when you are young they really just want to be understood and to be seen as having an opinion and a voice and I think they think that if they dress and act like that then that is way of expressing themselves and that they will be listened to.

3 Yeah.

5 Yeah, I agree but that is not necessarily real (.) that that is a good way to express yourself.

To show you are confident. Another reason given by girls for why they imitate sexualised media is that by taking on a sexualised posture girls show they are confident. One grade 9 group said:

1 It is like girls are being told that this is how you are supposed to show that you are confident.

4 Yeah, and like I don't get it (.). It is like it is a good thing to be confident to show your body and I don't get that.

3 Uh-huh.

M: Is there other ways to show that you are confident?

1 Yeah (.) but.

2 Yeah, there is but now it seems like this is more important.

To get attention. Girls also routinely mentioned imitating sexualised media to get attention. Girls are sent the message from the media that sexualised females get positive attention from others. For example, one grade 6 group noted:

M: What do you think about girls and women who do that? [change their appearance to look like sexualised media]

1 I think they want to get attention.

Similarly, a grade 9 said:

1 You want attention.

2 Yeah, like all the celebrities are noticed so you think they'll notice you too if you look like that.

5 And they think that if they do then most people will compliment them.

6 Yeah, they want the attention.

Likewise, in grade 12 it was said:

5 So, it is like, well, (.) if they are all following that then I should too.

2 Yeah, because it is like people will recognize you.

7 You'll get attention.

5 Yeah, like I want everyone to know me.

Another grade 12 group said:

3 Well, it is showing that girls who act like that get more attention and they get more attention so they seek to feel better about themselves by gaining compliments and it boosts their self-esteem and so they think well maybe if I dress like this all the time then maybe that is good (.)

M: Why do you think that is?

1 They think it will make you popular.

Success, fame, and respect. Girls also reported that they imitate this media to get success, fame, and respect. That is, they believe that girls and women who act and look sexualised are respected and admired by others and, therefore, get fame and success. In turn, girls seek that for themselves.

One grade 6 group mentioned:

M: Yeah? Why do you think that happens? [girls imitate this media]

4 Because they are cool.

5 Yeah and because they are famous <u>and.</u>

3 <u>They</u> are making lots of <u>money and.</u>

6 <u>Yeah, and</u> so they think that is the only way that I will make money, so let's do that.

Likewise, a grade 9 group discussed:

1 It seems like (.) when you are famous (.) what you do is walk around with no clothes on (.) and like I don't get it.

M: so do you think it makes it seem like if you want to be famous or successful as females that is how we should go about it?

All girls: **<u>Yeah!</u>**

2 Yeah, like that is more important than having talent. (.) Like singers like Britney Spears aren't even talented but they are popular just because of how they look.

3 Mmmm-hmmm (.) the way you look is more important (.) like Christina Aguilera (.) at a young age (.) like she is actually a really amazing singer (.) but then it is like it isn't enough like they had to make her look like a sex symbol.

As an example from a grade 12 group:

5 I think it is disappointing (.) because it's kinda a shame that (.) that girls feel like they have to do that to get respect (.) that is what I get.

M: So girls feel like they should dress and act like this to get respect?

3 Yeah.

1 Yeah.

2 Yeah.

All girls: (nod).

In conclusion, the above media messages decoded by girls are intertwined and related. Regardless of the specific message, girls indicated that the media is telling them that taking on a sexualised posture will produce positive outcomes for girls, particularly highly valued social outcomes (e.g., dating, friends, being admired and respected) in the current surroundings (e.g., at school) and in the future (e.g., career). Thus, if girls believe these messages, it is obvious why they would try to imitate the media models.

Social Comparison Processes: How Do Others Respond to this Media?

How do boys respond? In addition to the direct influence of media, girls across all groups reported they imitate sexualised media, in part, because they observe that boys react positively to it. This confirms for them the message that imitating sexualised media is a way to be liked by boys. If a girl likes a boy who responds positively to this media, she feels pressure to imitate it in order to gain that boy's attention. The following grade 6 group discussion illustrates this dynamic:

M: How does that make you girls feel when you hear guys saying that girl is hot or something like that?

1 **Depends on if you like him!**

All girls: (laughing)

2 **Yeah, like if you like him then you are like ughhhhh (dramatically)**

All girls: (laughing)

M: So if you heard that guy you like say he thought a girl who looked or acted like this in the media was hot, it would make you want to try to look like that?

3 Yeah, **sooooo much so!**

All girls: (laugh and nod heads)

Similarly, a grade 9 group discussed:

M: Do you think it changes how girls think they should act with boys or their behaviour towards boys?

All girls: **Yes!/Yeah!**

1 Yup, I think it makes them think they have to act all sexy.

4 To get guys.

2 Yeah, like especially when like whenever someone has a new music video come out (.) you always hear all the guys talking about them and they are like "Oh my god did you see that one? Did you see her? And like (.) being a girl (.) and overhearing it, it is like oohhh that is what they like?

3 Yeah, it feels like you have to act that way (.) like when we were in elementary school it was like "boys how gross, get away, don't touch me don't talk to me" and now it is like (.) I think guys expect you to act slutty.

5 Yeah, like they expect it. (.). Like they expect girls to be just like they act in magazines and look just like that.

2 Yeah, I think they want girls to be (.) easy.

4 I think they want girls to be Megan Fox.

Similarly, a grade 12 group stated:

M: Do you think that when girls watch girls and women acting and looking like this in the media it influences how girls act with boys?

1 Yeah.

2 I think so.

All others: (nod).

3 Yeah, because like the girls here (.) the guys are like (.) **oh my gosh it is Megan Fox** and girls are like (.) oh (.) maybe I should be like her if I want a guy.

1 Yeah, so you hear guys saying they like girls like that so it sorta teaches girls that is how you get a guy.

2 Yeah, like oh (.) **that's** how I should be.

Girls further pointed out that hearing boys talk about sexualised media females leads them to believe that boys will expect them to act similarly. For example, in grade 9, the following conversation transpired:

M: Ok, so what do you think boys think about girls who do act and look like this?

8 I think they do think that it is hot.

2 I think that they think that everyone should be like that (.) and people who aren't (.) can just (.) go.

All other girls: Yeah (and nodding).

M: So do you think they are learning this from the media what is attractive?

All girls: **Yes!/Yeah!**

3 **And then they expect that girls should go out and dress and act like that!**

Further, as an example from a grade 12 group:

4 Well, for me I also think that it does give guys ideas. Like they don't expect you to dress like that (.) but they do.

1 To act like that.

4 Yeah like **be** sexy like that.

All girls: Yeah.

4 And it is like ugh I am not going to feel comfortable acting like that.

6 Yeah, like dancing around with cupcakes on my **boobs!**

All girls: (laugh)

5 Yeah, I think they think that is what can happen behind closed doors.

7 Yeah, like if I let you get close enough if I spend some time on you I will get you to be like that.

1 Yeah, so it is also feeding the imaginations of guys.

3 Yeah, and like it becomes a fantasy.

Fear of being judged negatively by peers. Focus group participants also said girls imitate sexualised media due to fearing being judged negatively (e.g., not accepted, being gossiped about) by their peers if they fail to do so. Participants mentioned that girls have learned from the media to judge others harshly for not measuring up to this media. This issue was particularly salient for the grade 9 focus groups. For example, a grade 9 group discussed the following:

1 And some days it is like (.) ugh (.) I don't want to get dressed. I want to wear a big sweatshirt and sweatpants (.) but then you are like ugh **I can't do that**! Because it is like a fashion statement.

3 Yeah, but when you do wear something like that (.) everyone else is like **oh god what is she wearing?**

M: So people comment on your appearances?

All girls: **Yes!** (said angrily/bothered)

5 Yeah, and like when someone does say you look cute or something (.) that boosts my confidence, I know that (.) that is why I tell girls they look good.

3 But sometimes people aren't so nice.

M: So people say bad things about people's appearance too?

1 **Oohhhhh yeah!**

1 (Laughs)

All other girls: **Yes!**

6 **A lot!**

1Yes, like even you just walk by (.) and like five seconds after you are out of their sight they are like whisper, whisper, **“What is she wearing?! That is hideous!”**

2 Yeah, and I think they are learning to do that from TV.

4 On TV.

Another grade 9 group stated:

M: So for the girls that do imitate this, why do you think they do that?

1 To fit in.

3 Because they think that is what everyone else wants.

2 Yeah, (.) boys think they are easy. They think they are sluts but they are really just nice people who are just trying to please everyone.

3 Yeah, just trying to please boys (.) but you can’t please everybody.

4 It is about what you think other people are going to think about you (.) Like you are choosing to act like how you think others want you to act. (.) Like no one actually cares about what they actually think about themselves anymore. (.) It is all about just what other people think (.) and that is what I don’t get (.). Like why should it be other peoples’ opinions for what you look like?

M: So it is like girls are acting the way they think other people expect or want them to act but not necessarily how they actually themselves want to act?

4 **Hmmm-mmm!**

2 Yeah, like in the mornings, girls try on like five or six different outfits (.). Like I know that **I do!** I don’t know about you guys, but I try on so many different outfits and I am just like oh this looks horrible **people are going to make fun of me!**

1 Yeah, me too.

3 Yeah, like I try on my outfits like the night before for the next day (.) because it is like (.) everything is just so based on the way you look.

Likewise, a grade 12 group said:

1 And like you need to do so to like fit in.

5 Same with my family. Like I think I was maybe allowed to wear like (.) this blue eyeliner (.) but it was like the kind where like it didn’t really show or do anything but it made me feel like I was wearing makeup which **would make me feel soooooo much better about myself.**

2 I wasn't allowed to wear make-up either.

4 Yeah, and like for my little cousin like last year or the year before like she had so much African-American eyeliner like she had like the raccoon thing. But like (.) that is what she did (.) what girls are doing.

M: So it is like being normalized.

All girls: **Yeah/yes!**

M: By the media?

All girls: **Yeah/yes!**

7 And almost if like you don't do that (.) it is the fear of what people will think about you. What will they say about you?

Media females are perceived as role models. Participants in all groups stated that girls imitate sexualised media because they believe these females are role models. For example, the following was discussed by girls in one grade 6 group:

5 Well, for example there is a bunch of little girls and I asked them "who is your role model?" and they all said Miley Cyrus (.) and I am like (.) **what no!** (.) Haven't you seen her in the Tame Me video?

2 Yeah.

3 Yeah, and because they see so many females acting like that.

4 Yeah, like even if it was just a few people, they are on TV and then (.) then it makes everyone else think that.

3 Yeah, like that is the people you are supposed to look up to.

5 Yeah, they are like role models.

4 Yeah.

1 Yeah.

8 (nods head)

As well, a grade 12 group gave the following example:

3 Yeah, (.) like they think I look up to this.

4 They think people look up to this (.) people like this.

2 I just think (.) like getting back to the Hanna Montana thing and like the drug thing or whatever (.) I think like the girls see her as a role model and then it is like "oh, what is that? (.) I want to go out and try it out **too.** (.) And like it is **very** influential.

Inundation/repeat exposure. Lastly, girls in all the groups mentioned that sexualised media is imitated due to the overwhelming level of exposure. For example, one grade 12 group discussed:

4 It almost seems like (.) feels like (.) people expect you to dress like that because that is how people in the media dress and that is what you see **all** the time.

Similarly, another grade 12 group said:

2 Like how they alter girls' appearances and show them so unrealistically over and over again. Like it is the most influential thing (.) subconsciously for me.

Domain 3: Consequences of Viewing and Imitating Sexualised Media

Girls cited a number of negative consequences for girls resulting from viewing and/or imitating sexualised media. Girls in grade 9 and 12 focus groups indicated that, despite the media promise that imitating sexualised females will gain them desired social rewards, in reality this is often not the case. Even worse, girls may experience negative consequences. Notably, girls in grade 6 did not discuss this point, perhaps because they have not yet experienced/witnessed the potential negative repercussions (i.e., they have not yet had the same opportunity as older girls to see the consequences).

Being used and hurt by boys. Focus group participants indicated that one potential negative repercussion of imitating sexualised media is getting used, hurt, and mistreated by boys. As mentioned earlier, girls imitate hoping to gain both love and positive attention (as per the

media message). However, they said that, in the real world, the opposite can occur with boys.

For example, one grade 12 group said:

6 Yeah, like I have seen like it seems like some girls (.) like they have that kind of mind frame and they think if I go slutty then I will get popular, I'll get attention, but like they don't understand that boys won't actually mean that. Like, yeah, they may be with you for that but they won't really respect you. And like I think they end up putting themselves in getting themselves into situations where they didn't expect how they were going to end up being treated (.) where they didn't even want that.

3 Yeah, like guys will want to like fool around with you at a party but they won't remember your name or want to be your friend now.

All girls: Yeah.

3 Like that just creates a (.) a story to tell (.) and like that is something in like grade 10 and in like junior high like if you are just getting attention from an older guy that is like the coolest thing ever and all that matters is that and you don't care how you got that attention.

6 Yeah, but now you realize (.) like our guy friends and how they treat the younger girls (.) like you realize it was all just like **a huge joke!**

All other girls: **Yeah/yes!**

6 Like it makes you look back and like.

7 Yeah, like when you were in grade 10 and wow like this guy talked to me. But now you realize that he probably afterwards just laughed about it and laughed about you the way our friends do now.

All girls: **Yeah!**

3 Yeah, it is like the attention from older guys that you were getting that you thought was soooo great was all just (.) mockery.

Similarly, another grade 12 group stated:

M: Okay, so I only have a few minutes left before I will get you to fill out the last questionnaires but what do you think, we have sort of covered this, but do you think boys like it when girls act and behave sexy?

1 Yes.

2 Yes.

7 Yes.

All other girls: (nodding).

4 Some of them.

5 Yeah, but it is like they may want to have sex with that person but that doesn't necessarily mean they want to date them.

3 Yeah, like you may just have sex with someone who has a skanky image but why would you want to date them? It would be just like man your girlfriend is a **skank!**

4 Yeah, there is a difference between wanting to have sex with someone like that and dating them (.) like to guys if you have sex with someone with a reputation it is still like **Hey! Way to go man!** But if you date them that is another story.

All girls: (laughter)

1, 4, 6 (nodding)

2 Yeah, but they want that **I'm sure!**

Further to this, girls indicated that, at the extreme, girls are not only hurt by boys but can become victims of violence and harassment. Girls said that their imitating sexualised media (in addition to it being impersonally promoted and normalized in the media) leads boys to think that sexual harassment and violence is acceptable, normal, and even desired by girls. For example, one grade 6 group stated:

3 I think a lot of the time it is the guys pressuring the girls (.) but a lot of the time it is the girls giving the guys the wrong idea.

M: Guys pressure girls?

1, 2, 3, 4 (all nod)

5 A lot.

3 Yes, **a lot** of guys pressure girls but they often are being egged on by girls giving them the wrong idea.

Another grade 6 group said the following:

1 But girls have a choice to act that way (.) just because a guy wants you to have sex (.) you don't have to.

2 Yeah, but once there was this movie (.) **Just listen** (.) and the girl didn't want to have sex with her boyfriend so her boyfriend **raaaaaaped** her because she didn't want to have sex with him.

4 **Whaooo**! (covers mouth, as if astonished)

7 **What!?**

8 **What!?**

1 Yeah, that often happens I think.

3 Me too (.) I think it happens often (.) like when girls dress too much like this (.) it makes guys think you want to have sex with them and then.

4 Like you are leading them on and they get the wrong idea and then it leads to sexual harassment.

1 Yeah, (.) it makes the guy think (.) oh, this person wants me (.) and then they end up sexually harassing the girl because you gave them that message.

2 Yeah, and then like a guy just goes to take off your clothes like that. (said fast)

M: So you are saying that this media doesn't just lead to girls and women having sex but to some sexual violence (.) harassment?

1, 5 Yup.

All girls: (nod)

7, 8 Yeah.

3 It's porn.

1 Yeah, because there is a difference between having sex and like (.) porn.

2 Yeah, because the girls will act like (.) lalala (said in high voice) (makes sexual moves) and then the guy will be like "Oh, well she is **asking for it!"**

4 Yeah, I think sometimes the girls are acting like they are asking for it (.) like you make your own choices (.) with the guys you hang out with and the guys you date.

M: Okay, okay so let's back this up (.) so you think that this media makes boys and men think girls and women want to have sex with them?

All girls: (nod)

8 Yeah.

3 Yeah.

M: Even though the girls and women may not actually want to have sex with them?

1 Yup, (.) and that boys, men **just can!**

2 Like when a guy watches like I don't really blame the guys like I mean when you watch these videos (.) and when they see the girls always do these things (.) they are going to get that idea.

5 **Exactly!**

1 When you see all these girls going around humping everything half naked of course boys are going to think girls want to have sex with them.

2 Yeah, (.) so when a guy sees that (.) he's like, oh, well I bet she wouldn't mind.

5 If you act like that aren't covered like that you have to know the boy will get the wrong idea.

Similarly, the following exchange occurred in one grade 9 group:

M: What about sexual harassment? You think the media promotes that?

1, 3, 6, 9 Yeah.

2 I think so.

8 Lots.

All other girls: (nodding)

2 Yeah, like if you dress or act like that (.) then people will think you are (.) easy and that you will just do whatever.

4 Easy.

3 Yeah, like they want that attention and want to be treated like that.

Grade 12 groups also discussed similar issues. For example, one grade 12 group discussed a particular situation that many girls had recently experienced. They viewed it as an

example of how sexualised media promotes sexual harassment as acceptable and then boys imitate it. On one hand, the discussion across all groups indicated that girls take on this sexualised behaviour and it leads to harassment or other unwanted behaviour from boys. But, sometimes, as the following statement indicates, it can occur to girls regardless of how they behave:

1 Or like at our **formal!**

Some other girls: (groan) and the others (nod)

2 Like this is **soooo terrible!** Like the DJ is like, kay, I want 6 girls to come up and like he is getting the music together and the guys start chanting "**Show tits for the guys! Show tits for the guys!"** (.) and like I was (.) it was sooo embarrassing. **So embarrassing!** Like the entire room just like erupted. Like the entire place was just screaming that and I was like **oh god.**

4 Yeah, it was really terrible.

All others: (nod)

M: What was this? (.) Oh it is like a formal dance?

6 Yeah, and it makes you so uncomfortable.

2 Yeah, like (.) it is like I know you don't actually expect me to like flash you right now but (.) it's just like that you would **actually say that to me** (.) like that it is something that is actually coming out of your mouth right now.

5 Yeah, and like teachers were there and everything.

7 Yeah, and that sort of thing is **not** like a onetime thing. Like that is a common thing in our school.

1 Yeah they make a lot of like (.) sexual comments.

4 Yeah.

Gossiping, name calling, and social exclusion. Another negative consequence of imitating this media, mentioned in all focus groups, is that peers may end up name calling, excluding, and gossiping about you. Girls said that, although the media promotes a sexualised

posture as how girls are liked and accepted, often this isn't true. For example, one grade 9 group stated:

2 So (.) sometimes (.) when you act like this it actually makes people think less of you.

6 Yeah, like (.) there is this one girl (.) I won't say her name (.) but she gets (.) like constantly (.) called (.) names (.) for like the way she acts and the way she dresses (.) but I guess she kinda just brought in upon herself.

7 Yeah, like on one hand you are being told you should be like this but then when you do. (.) guys might like you but girls won't.

8 Yeah, (.) like it is hard to please both sides.

4 Yeah, like if you go too far (.) you will be like **ex-communicated**!

1 **Shunned!**

Grade 12 groups discussed similar issues:

M: So what do you think happens to the girls that do buy into this?

7 Well, for some girls like when you have the whole like "slut person" thing going like people stop talking to you. Like people just see you as that person and like people don't want to hang out with you.

All other girls: Yeah/yes (nod heads).

4 Yeah, and like some people do want to act like that. Like there were girls this year for sure.

All others: Yeah/yes.

1 Yeah, like there is a girl in our school who said like some really raunchy stuff to guys. And like instead of (.) like I don't know what she was looking for like to be popular or to be liked or whatever all that happened is (.) it has turned out that she just has this terrible reputation (.) and like even her friends (.) like her friends of hers in the beginning like they don't want to be associated with her because they don't want to be like yelled at in the hallways and like talked about by others. And it is sad because it is like (.) you know you were just looking for popularity and it backfired so terribly.

Another grade 12 group discussed the following:

M: So do you see girls acting or imitating these behaviours like in the ads and the videos?

All girls: **Yes!**

M: Why do you think that is?

1 They think it will make you popular.

M: Does it make you popular?

4 Not necessarily.

5 It makes you easy.

M: Yeah? (.) Do girls get reputations for that?

2 Yeah.

1 Yeah.

6 Yeah.

5 Yup.

All other girls: (nod)

3 Yeah, like these girls that went to our school they (.) I guess they think they are cool when they act like that (.) and I mean I think guys probably like that at first, but everybody else they just kind of think they are trashy, like nobody really takes them seriously.

1 Yeah, you won't be taken seriously (.) like there was one girl and she texted **the whole hockey team.**

All other girls: (laugh)

2 Yeah, like I think everyone knows about this (.) this girl texted like all these slutty things to say to someone, and they passed it around and then she got this horrible reputation (.) and like no one (.) like she like hides pretty much at school now and like it is like she obviously made a mistake and like no one is letting her forget it.

Secondary problems: Unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and psychological issues. Girls also mentioned negative consequences of imitating that could be called "secondary problems," in the sense that they arise as a result of the problems just described (i.e., being used by boys, losing friends, and secondarily to having sex). Secondary problems include (a) unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), (b)

psychological issues (e.g., low self–esteem, depression, drug use). For example, in grade 6 the following was discussed related to unplanned pregnancy:

6 Yes, but I think that doing so can really determine your life (.) because you might end up pregnant (.) and that will just change you entire life.

3 Yes, the way you dress and the guys you date (.) can alter your entire life.

Similarly, a grade 12 group mentioned:

3 Yeah, like teen mothers are naming their kids 'Miley' now. Like there has been a real increase in like baby names after her which shows her influence.

5 **Oh my god! I have a good one! Teen Mom!**

All others: **<u>Oh Yeah/Yeah/(nods)!</u>**

6 Yeah, like Fifteen and pregnant.

7 Yeah, like I think it glorifies teen pregnancy.

5 Me too.

4 Yeah, I can see what you are saying, but like to me (.) it like horrifies teen pregnancy.

5 Yeah, but there are girls out there now who want to get pregnant and think that is ok or cool because of shows like that.

4 True, but you only see one happy couple on that show and it is the couple that give their baby up for adoption. That is the only couple that is still together (.) and like it makes me feel like (.) I am sooo sad for you (.) because even if you love your boyfriend life is not going to be good together. Like you are always stressed about something (.) always worrying about doing enough to take care of the baby.

7 Yeah, like back in the day (.) you could get a steady job without like college or university <u>but now</u> without that you are going to have such a hard life.

All other girls: <u>Yeah/uh-huh.</u>

6 Yeah, and like all of those girls (.) they don't have the money to go to university because they are paying for their kid.

5 Or the time like you know (.) most of them are so young and your life is consumed you don't have time to go to class (.) like this season they have trouble like graduating from high school.

3 Yeah, and like what are they going to do with their baby? Like they can't even afford daycare.

7 Yeah, like they are completely struggling.

1Yeah, and like in Sixteen and Pregnant when they show the girls giving birth.

7 Yeah, like it is pain and like it is **terrifying** at that age.

All girls: (laugh)

7 Yeah, and there was also a show where it was like a high school for pregnant girls.

6 Yeah, but then they shouldn't be like glorifying it by putting it on TV. Like yes, the shows show the reality of it but still (.) these girls basically get famous and money just for getting pregnant and having a baby as a teenager.

1Yeah, so yeah like now those girls are famous now. **They are in all the magazines!**

7 Yeah, like they had this cover story on this girl. And it is like what did you do to get famous? **You had a baby at 16** (.) like

5 Yeah.

6 Yeah.

4 Yeah, and like they get an MTV show.

6 Yeah, like MTV takes so much advantage.

7 Yup, and you look at Macy on the 16 show and she is so cute and she has gone through two boys who have dumped her because of the baby. And like it makes me so sad for her you know?

All other girls: Yeah/yes.

7 Like girls aren't ready for it at 16 but **guys certainly aren't ready** for it at 16. They don't have the ability for it you know, that stress, that life.

As an example related to negative psychological consequences, the following was mentioned in a grade 12 group:

M: So are you saying that the media equates for girls and women that looking sexy and or slutty to use your words is (.) equated with love?

4 Yeah, like in the real world and in the movies you see that girls use sex to get love and guys use love to get sex (.) like it is backwards and it is not really love (.) and by buying into that they are left even more empty than when they started.

M: So, girls feel empty to start with and want love so they act sexy or try to act like what they see in the media to get it and that makes them feel more empty than when they started?

5 Exactly.

4 And they get more hurt.

3 Yeah, like I am doing this to be loved but I am just going to find out if I use sex to get love I am just going to be hurt and get rejected.

4 Yeah, and to add on, they think they'll get what they want but I think they feel worse about themselves after.

6 So it is like you start with low self-esteem and then you buy into this to try to fix that and in the end you just end up with lower self-esteem and feeling worse about yourself.

Similarly, in another grade 12 group, the following discussion took place:

5 Yeah, like it just ends up that they end up depressed or with really low self-esteem.

7 Yeah, and it is like those people just like continue to go like so far downhill.

All other girls: **Yeah/yes!**

1 I have seen that.

2 Um-hum.

7 It is like you just get a really bad reputation (.) with like boys, others.

All others: (nod)/Yeah.

Walking a fine line between imitating too much and not enough

Despite the negative consequences associated with imitating sexualised media, girls across grades still brought up fear of negative consequences associated with not imitating enough (e.g., not fitting in, not having a boyfriend). Therefore, they feel the need to imitate these images, at least to a certain extent. That is, girls argued that sexualised females need to be imitated in

order to get the social rewards, but that girls just can't go "too far." Girls described a walking a fine line trying to navigate this. They needed to figure out how to imitate these images enough to be accepted and fit in, while not going so far as to be excluded or labelled. They described this navigation as ambiguous and, therefore, unfair and stressful. For example, in grade 6 girls mentioned regularly that there were real negative consequences of not imitating, such as having no boys like you. For example, from one group:

M: So what happens if that is not how girls want to act?

1 Then no boys.

All girls: (nod)/Yes.

M: Is that fair?

All girls: **No!**

As another example of this need to imitate, but not too much, in a grade 12 group the following exchange took place:

M: Are girls who act like (.) act sexy or have sex (.) are they popular?

7 I think there is a line.

5 Yeah.

4 Yeah, and once you have crossed it (.) like we have all experienced this with one girl in our school (.) and once you have crossed it is like there is noooo going back.

5 Yeah, like she was going to switch schools.

6 It's like it is important to be wanted by guys (.) and there is a certain point to which you can be with guys but (.) like once it gets out that you are a complete slut then people won't want to hang out with you because you that reputation.

5 Yeah, and then you won't even have like girlfriends anymore (.) like I know there is girls I won't hang out with because I have heard of them taking boyfriends and it's like I don't want you to take my boyfriend.

All girls: (nod)

Similarly, another grade 12 group said:

6 Yeah, it is like you have to find a balance (.) because like if you just wear turtle necks all the time then it is like hmmm I don't know if I want to be friends with that person you look boring (laughs) but then on the other hand it is like **Oh** I can almost see your nipple in that shirt!

Domain 4: Risk and Protective Factors

Although girls acknowledged imitating sexualised images, they also mentioned some factors that potentially moderate the relationship between exposure to sexualised media and its' degree of influence on girls.

Age of viewer. Girls across grades generally agreed that the age of the girls being exposed to sexualised media influences the extent of, and in which ways, they are influenced by it. Overall, girls believed that younger girls are more likely to be affected (or differentially affected) than older girls. In their discussions, they cited developmental factors including: (a) cognitive sophistication (e.g., younger girls more likely to believe what they see in the media to be real; thinking is more concrete) and (b) psychosocial (i.e., identity development) that changes over the course of adolescence. That is, girls indicated that as they approach adolescence they begin to wonder about who they are (that is, they begin to ask identity questions) and they search out messages about themselves from the world around them. They experiment with different identities and roles that they see. Over the course of adolescence, their identity becomes more fixed and stable. Girls believed that, for this reason, at early adolescence, when they are less sure of their identity and are still deciding and experimenting with who they want to be, they are more at-risk of imitating sexualised media. For example, one grade 9 group said:

1 Makes younger girls want to change how they look too.

4 Yeah, I actually think it is worse for younger girls (.) like I think that by now (.) you like (.) you just wear what you want to wear but when you are younger you just look at them and want to look like that and be like them **so bad.**

M: So why do you think that is worse for younger girls?

3 I think it is because we understand more that (.) it is like (.) fake (.) and like they don't really get it.

2 Yeah, when you are younger you don't understand that it is not real.

Similarly, girls in another grade 9 group stated:

M: So do you think that even though you guys are saying these are altered images, (.) you can't look like that, (.) that it is influencing people to try to alter the way they look?

2 Yeah, like little kids (.) **they don't know you can't look like that!** And they think I want to dress like that and they don't get it (.) they don't understand that makes you look 18 and like you are going to a bar.

6 Yeah, I think it is even more influential on little girls because for us, (.) like I have heard the body image talk lots now, but little girls (.) like when you are little you are going to think oh she looks so pretty I want to look like that and you are going to feel bad about yourself when you don't.

1 I think it is like Santa Claus for little girls (.) like we all thought that it was real and when someone told you he wasn't you were like (.) no, he is real (.) and that is what is going on here (.) it is messing with kids heads (.) because it looks real and like you can say that you can't really look like that but they believe it.

3 Yeah, like it is normal to have sooooo much boobage with your waist like as skinny as like nothing.

As can be seen from the above transcripts, these focus group participants are suggesting that younger girls are more likely to believe what they see to be real, which makes them more susceptible. However, as girls get older, they have more cognitive ability to understand that the image may not be real. Similarly, girls in grade 12 felt that younger girls might be more at-risk of being influenced because they don't fully understand that by imitating these images they would be coming across as "sexy" (i.e., that these images are related to sex). For example, one grade 12 group discussed:

7 Yup, and because they are naïve you know like if they see that they don't know anything else like they don't have anything set in their mind (.) like when we see it (.) like I don't know, the Candyland thing.

5 Whipped cream shooting out of boobs and stuff (girls laugh) we can look at that and think (.) that is **ridiculous** (.) but kids will just look at it and think, well, they won't quite know what is really going on.

7 They'll be like **I want to do that!**

All girls: (nod) (laugh).

6 Yeah, like we see the humour whereas they are way more impressionable. They just think (.) well, Katy Perry is pretty (.) Katy Perry is popular, so I want to be like Katy Perry and do whatever she does. **You know?**

M: So young girls think, oh Katy Perry is popular, Katy Perry is pretty, so I maybe should go dress like that or act like that?

All girls: **Yeah/yes!**

5 Like for most of us by now (.) you have your own style (.) and once you get to a certain age you got your own thing but like in elementary school or a bit older (.) you just want to be cool.

1 Yup.

2 Yeah.

3 Yeah.

7 And try to fit in with others.

4 Hmm-hmm. Yeah, and like the media is playing a role in like dictating what that is.

5 Like how some girls in middle school (.) like they try so hard to live up to whatever is (.) the **cool** or whatever (.) and I have seen that it (.) changes people (.) that they would like. (.) Like I have moved on from that, (.) I have suffered from that, where like I'll jeopardize who I am so that I can be popular. But like, (.) like you realize I can't do that (.) like it is unrealistic (.) but it affects middle schoolers for the worst. Like they start going downhill. They turn to like drugs and like with boys like.

All other girls: **Yeah/yes.**

6 Yeah, and like when you are younger like little (.) it is not necessarily like that you are like, "oh that is sexy I want to be sexy." It is like, "oh that is Katy Perry I want to be like Katy Perry."

All other girls: Yeah.

6 Yeah, and so it goes back to not really understanding the repercussions.

Similarly, another grade 12 group discussed:

M: So, we have touched on this already but do you think (.) or have you seen in this school or in other schools that the media does influence girls' behavior?

2 **Yes.**

3 **Yes.**

All girls: (nods)

6 Yeah, for sure.

1 Yes, but especially when you are even younger. Like, for example the grade 9s. Like everyone kinda hates them and they are very much buying into this and I think it is because they are trying to get attention and they are trying to get respect (.) maybe from older people.

M: So you see that the younger you are, the more influenced you are.

1 Yeah, for sure (.) and it is a way to get attention and respect and (.) like (.) especially in grade 9 (.) like if you date an older guy (.) it is **such a big thing!**

5 **Yeah.**

6 **Yeah.**

M: Why is that?

1 Well, I think probably just because (.) you know (.) you are new to the school and it's like (.) oh, an older guy that has been here already and could choose any one and they choose me and things.

3 I also think that it affects more elementary and middle school students (.) because for example by my house there is an elementary school and they walk out of there in skirts thaaaaaaat juuust cover their (indicates very short skirts with hand just covering her bottom) and (.) like just under their bum (.) and you obviously look at them and think **how can their parents let them dress like that?**!

M: Yeah? How about the rest of you? What are your reactions to seeing someone who is 10 or 11 or 12 dressing very provocatively like that? Like how she says?

6 **It is disgusting!** (Laughs)

5 **Yeah! And I don't think they understand!** Like at that age I don't think they are thinking about what they are doing or dressing on like a sexual vibe (.) like (.) I think that what they are seeing (.) and interpreting is simply **Oh look!** Katy Perry dresses like that (.) she has **everything**! She has **the life! So, I'm going to dress like that too!** And I don't think they are getting all the implications behind it. Like I think at that age there is a lack of understanding (.) like they don't have the mindset yet to really get what it is all about (.) what they are doing.

Similarly, another grade 12 group said:

4 Yeah, but I find it is the total opposite (.) I find that the easier you are to get to (.) the less respected you really are.

5 That is true buuuut.

3 But people don't put two and two together!

2 Yeah.

5 Yeah.

1 Yeah, like I find that people don't respect people who act and look like that like (.) in grade 12 all the guys are like oh, she is easy, like who cares about her (.) I think that when you are younger it is more of an influence but once you get older you (.) it's like you realize (.) you realize that you **should cover up!** (laughs)

As can be seen from the above quotes, according to these girls, younger girls are more likely to believe what they see to be real, whereas as girls get older they have more ability to understand that the images may not be real. Similarly, girls expressed that younger girls are less apt to understand that, by imitating these images, they would be coming across as "sexy" or that these images are related to sex. Girls in grade 9 and 12 believe that this lack of awareness makes younger girls (i.e., those in elementary school and middle school) more susceptible.

Girls in grade 12 also indicated that, in addition to cognitive sophistication, psychosocial factors such as identity development change over adolescence and influence the extent to which girls respond to sexualised media. They seemed to believe that, by grade 12, girls generally have developed a more stable, secure identity. In contrast, younger girls are still wondering who they

are, putting them more at-risk of being influenced to imitate the identity being shown in the media. For example, one grade 12 group mentioned:

6 Yeah, I like wore way more makeup in junior high than I do now.

All girls: (nod)/Yeah.

7 Yeah, like I tried soooooo much harder when I was in junior high.

6 Yeah, like when you are that age you have like **no idea** who you are (.) right?

5 Yeah, it is like when you are weakest.

7 Yeah, like I think junior high is a dangerous time for girls to be influenced by stuff like this (points to the video camera) because you are unsure of yourself and who you are.

All other girls: (nod)/Yeah/Yes.

3 Yeah, (.) like you are soooooo confused about who you are and like who you want to be.

6 Yeah, and like everyone has so many phases (.) like you know the first boyfriend (.) you know, and like some girls develop soooo much faster than other girls.

It is noteworthy that, although the theme that being younger in age is related to being more influenced by the media did come up in grade 6 focus group conversations, these younger girls did not explore this topic to the extent than the grade 9s and 12s did (e.g., they did not go into the developmental dynamics). This may result from not having the reflective sophistication and experience of the older girls that would allow them to go into detail on this point.

Age of media female. Grade 12 girls also indicated that the age of female in the media is related to how much influence it has on girls. They said that the more similar in age the female was to the viewer, the more influence she may exert on the viewer. For example, one grade 12 group stated the following:

1 Yeah, and especially if the role model is like a younger person (.) like if you see a person who is in their 20s and 30s you may think, like kay, this isn't really all that applicable to my life now that I am only 15 or 16 (.). But, if you see someone who is only 15 or 16 years old doing that then it is even more relevant and you pay more attention.

7 Yeah, when the media models are closer in age it is probably even more influential than when the models are adult women.

5 Yeah, because you think like oh that is what people my age (.) or teenagers just a bit older are doing.

Of note, girls in grades 6 and 9 did not bring up this theme. This could mean that it isn't as salient an issue for younger girls, or that girls in grade 12 are more able to reflect on which age of female images have the most influence on them.

Individual differences. Another theme, identified by girls in all grades, is that certain individual factors mediate the likelihood and extent to which girls will be influenced. In particular, girls cited self-esteem and self-confidence. For example, the following ideas were shared in a grade 6 group:

6 I think that they are just not confident.

3 Yeah.

4 And they feel bad about themselves.

8 So you want to be like them [the media females].

Similarly, another grade 6 group stated:

M: Why would they want to do that? Why would they see this and then want to change how they are with boys?

3 Because they are uncomfortable with themselves.

2 Yeah.

1 Yeah, because they are uncomfortable with themselves.

3 Yeah, so they see this and think that is how I am supposed to act.

Grade 9 girls expressed similar ideas. For example, in one such group:

7 It depends on the girl.

1 Yeah, like everyone acts different.

8 For some people it makes them think they should be sexual.

9 Or show off their body.

Grade 12 girls also offered similar comments about self-esteem. For example:

M: So you have said that not all girls act like that (.) why do you girls think that some girls are influenced by the media to act like that and not others?

1 Some girls just have higher self esteem than other girls.

Likewise, another grade 12 group said:

1 I think the reason why some girls get into this is because of low self-esteem and they think they well, that is the only option for me.

6 I think that they are insecure and (.) it is like their way of (.) like they think hey, maybe if I dress like this and act like this then people will think I am pretty but you don't have to dress like that to be pretty all you have to do.

2 Some people feel insecure and so they think maybe I should go and be like that and then people will like me too.

1 Yeah, I think that some people who go to those extremes like they have an addictive personality and like they can't stop.

M: So there are individual differences? Not everyone is affected to the same extent?

1 Yeah, for some people it won't influence you but for others it can be a major influence on how you feel about yourself.

Protective Factors

The girls were not specifically asked questions related to what factors might protect girls from being unduly influenced by sexualised media. However, girls across grades and groups spontaneously brought up some ideas related to this.

Media literacy. Media literacy/media education was suggested as a potential protective factor. It was discussed mostly by girls in grade 12. Grade 6 and 9 girls had some similar ideas but, overall, they didn't talk about media literacy often, possibly because younger girls have not

been as heavily exposed yet to the issue of media literacy. The conversations related to media literacy indicated that it teaches girls that sexualised images are unrealistic. In grade 12 groups, girls stated that now that they have been exposed to media literacy, it has helped them be more critical of media. For example, one grade 12 group said the following, in the context of a conversation related to how the media influences girls to change or feel bad about themselves:

4 I think sometimes [it influences girls to feel bad/change], but I think that by this age we are learning about the media and how it affects people (.) and it makes you think more critically about what you are looking at (.) and it makes you realize **Oh!** That is just photoshopped (.) or altered and it is not real.

M: So you find that getting those messages about the media that help you to think critically are important?

All girls: <u>(nod) /Yes.</u>

1 Yeah.

6 Yes.

M: When did you first start getting those messages and media courses?

1 Grade 9.

3 Grade 9 and a little earlier.

5 Maybe like grade 8, grade 7.

1 Yeah, and that helps you put two and two together.

Similarly, another grade 12 group mentioned:

6 Yeah, (.) and I also think (.) like we learned about this in psychology, that there for example is the Dove campaign that helps you learn and understand that these images aren't even real and that no one looks like that (.) and that I don't have to try to look airbrushed because it is not possible.

3 Yeah, like they showed how they re-shaped her jaw.

4 And made her neck longer.

All girls: <u>Yeah/Yes.</u>

5Yeah, so it is just showing how the media thinks you can never look perfect enough.

Positive (non-sexualised) media models. Girls said that they would appreciate viewing non-sexualised media messages and images (e.g., teenage television stars who wear functional clothing and little make-up). It may be that these messages also serve a protective function (i.e., by sending the message that not only a sexualised appearance is considered attractive). However, girls noted that they don't receive these messages often. Girls in grade 12, in particular, indicated that there were fewer non-sexualised female media models today than when they were younger. Regarding their protective function, one grade 6 group said the following:

8 Yup, and there was this girl who was (.) 17 (.) on Glee (.) and she got botox.

3 Yeah, and another one on that show (.) one of the cheerleaders (.) she got boobs (.) like boob stuff done.

1Yeah, but I think most boys and men like it when you look like that.

3Yeah.

4Uh-hummm but mostly younger guys I think.

6 Yeah, but then the cheerleading coach (.)

1 Sue?

6 Yeah, Sue. She kinda got mad at her and I think that was kinda good to show the girls.

3Yeah, Sue was buggin' her so much.

6 Yeah, and she was mad at her and wouldn't let her be a cheerleader.

M: So you think it is good for you girls to get those messages from adults? (.) That you don't need to change yourself?

All girls: <u>Yeah/yes/ hmm-mmm/(nods).</u>

M: Do you get that kind of message from adults (.) that you don't need to change?

1 Ummmm (seems unsure).

2, 6, 8 (shake heads no)/ No.

3 It is like 50-50, sometimes you see them acting like that too.

2 Yeah, and they should know better.

A grade 12 group stated:

3 Sometimes I think like (.) our grade was like the last one to have like any sort of good influence (.) like I know for me (.) like it was like Lizzy Maguire and you wanted to be like her.

7 Yeah, and like she was like a **good** role model.

All others: Yeah/(nod).

3 Yeah, and like she carried herself as like a (.) a respectable person.

7 Yeah, you are right she was.

3 Yeah, and like on her shows she had like (.) modest clothing.

5 Yeah, and like size (.) **Like she had a good size!**

All others: Yeah/yes.

6 Yeah, she wasn't like super skinny like you see them all like now.

4 Yeah, and like her clothes were like not like so sexy and you were like cool, I want to dress like that.

3 Yeah, and like that was great (.) and I think she was like the last really good role model in the media for girls.

7 Yeah, it seems like our generation is the last generation for that.

All other girls: **Yeah!**/(nod)

3Yeah, like now they are all going like downhill.

7 Yeah, like now they have Hannah Montana.

2 And Miley Cyrus.

3 And all of her nakedness.

6 Yeah, there is a naked picture of Miley Cyrus out there.

4 Yeah, and the pic of her when she was 15 on the cover where she looks naked.

6 Yeah, the Vanity Fair one.

7 Yeah, like there is one of her in like a hotel room and like (.) she is like (.) **it has gotten out of control.**

2 Yeah, she is like fully naked in that one.

5 Yeah, like they just do it for publicity

6 **Yeah, and what does that say**?

1 Yeah, but like worse. The audience is like **little kids** for that show! Like **you shouldn't be doing that!**

Family influences. Family was mentioned as a reason why girls may not imitate this media, moreso by grade 9 and grade 12 girls than by grade 6 girls. In general, this topic was not dynamically discussed (e.g., with enthusiasm and lots of discussion). However, again, the researcher did not probe for it specifically, so it is noteworthy that the topic came up naturally in conversation. In regard to family being an influence, one grade 9 group stated:

M: And why wouldn't girls imitate it?

1 Because you don't want to come off as a whore or something.

4 Because you don't want to bring shame to your family (.) you want to keep yourself proud of who you are (.) and you want to keep your friends and family proud of you.

Older female role model or mentor. Having a non-sexualised, older female role model or mentor (e.g., a family member, teacher, an older female peer) was also mentioned as a potentially positive influence. In their group discussions, it was mentioned that girls may look up to and listen to older females. For example, one grade 12 group indicated:

1 I think in particular for little girls (.) if they don't have a female mentor (.) like if they are an only child kind of person (.) then their parents will be more willing to let them dress and act that way (.) like to wear short skirts and I think also that makes the "role models" (uses hands to

emphasize quotation marks) in the media more influential on those girls too. And if they do have older sisters or like (.) close moms then they may realize (.) before taking on these ideas (.) that **oh** that is not right **oh** look my mom is not wearing a shirt down to here (shows cleavage).

M: So you are saying that you, or young girls, may be protected from buying into this if they have older, non-sexy female role models like older sisters or moms?

1 Yeah exactly.

2 And moms who don't think that their daughters have lots of models and supports may be more inclined to feel badly and then allow their daughters to dress and look up to the media.

Ethnicity. Ethnicity was also discussed as a potential protective factor by some girls. More specifically, some girls said that being non-Caucasian might be a protective factor. However, this was only mentioned in a few groups. One grade 9 group stated:

5 I think it also has to do with culture (.) [imitating and being influenced by sexualised media] like I am Brown and I think things are a bit different (.) like when I was growing up saying "shut up" in grade 5 was like the worst thing ever.

1 Yeah, I agree, I am Metis and I could care less.

As can be seen from this example, these two girls seem to be saying that being non-Caucasian might be a protective factor. It is not entirely clear why minority ethnicity would serve a protective function. In the above example, one girl seems to be saying that her family held values and expectations that were strict, which she relates to being "Brown" and her culture. This may have persuaded her to either not want to imitate this media (to be more in-line with her cultural values as influenced through her family). Conversely, this girl may want to imitate but her family is strictly prohibitive (e.g., refusing to buy sexualised clothing, not allowing her to watch sexualised media in the home).

The second girl indicates that being Metis is related to her not wanting to imitate sexualised media. However, she did not explain why. One possibility is that she does not see

Metis sexualised images in the media. This girl may, therefore, not believe the sexualised media images are targeting her and not view them as important role models.

The results of each of these domains, presented in detail previously, will now be summarized in turn. These results reflect what was said by participants.

Summary of Thematic Analysis Results

The thematic results can be categorized into four domains. The first domain is girls' reaction to the sexualised media. This pertains to how often girls notice sexualised media and what do girls notice about this media. That is, on what characteristics of the sexualised females do they pick up? To what details are they paying the most attention? This domain also pertains to how does viewing this media make girls feel, and why?

The second domain pertains to the issue of girls imitating this media. More specifically, do girls imitate it, in what ways do girls imitate it, and why do girls imitate it?

The third domain concerns the consequences for girls of imitating this media. Girls indicated that despite the media promise that, by imitating the sexualised females, girls can get desired social rewards, in reality girls who imitate this media do not necessarily reap such positive rewards. Instead, negative consequences such as being socially excluded may occur.

The fourth domain concerns risk and protective factors of sexualised media influence on girls. Regarding risk factors, these include (a) age of viewer (younger girls are more at-risk of being influenced by sexualised media); (b) age of sexualised media model (the closer in age the media model to the viewer, the more likely the media model will be imitated) and (c) individual differences, such as pre-existing levels of self-esteem (girls with lower self-esteem may be more likely to be negatively influenced). Regarding protective factors, girls mentioned media literacy, non-sexualised media models, non-sexualised family influenced and non-Caucasian ethnic

background as all potentially protecting girls from being negatively influenced by sexualised media of girls.

Domain 1: Girls' reaction to sexualised girl media.

Girls routinely see media sexualising girls and young women. They are very aware of being immersed within this media in their everyday lives. Girls notice a number of key characteristics about this media: (a) it is targeting and influencing girls; (b) it is getting worse (e.g., more degrading); (c) it is promoting a pornographic/promiscuous form of sex; (d) it is related to sexism/ inequality; (e) females are naked/scantily clad; (f) sexualised females (as opposed to non-sexualised females) are over-represented in the media; (g) females are thin; (h) the female images have been altered /changed (i.e., they are made to look thinner and their breasts are enlarged); and (i) the sexualised image almost always is unrelated to what is being sold.

Girls reported that viewing sexualised girls in the media makes them feel negative/bad about themselves. First, this is because girls compare themselves to the media. This self-comparison process makes some girls feel negative about the way they look. Girls grasp the message that a sexualised female is considered ideal and that only a sexualised appearance is considered attractive in our culture. Girls come to the conclusion that they do not look or act the same as the images they see. This makes them feel bad because they would like to be attractive, but if they don't look like the media females, they must not be attractive.

Second, conversely, for some girls this self-comparison process makes them feel bad about themselves even if they don't necessarily want to look like the sexualised media females (e.g., they don't want to act sexy or wear revealing clothing). However, these girls interpret the media as saying that is how they should/are supposed to look and/or act. That is, being

sexualised is the norm. This bothers girls who don't want to emulate this media because they interpret the discrepancy between what they want, and what they are being told they should want, as meaning there is something wrong with them.

Third, viewing this media also makes girls feel bad because they find it offensive (i.e., this media makes girls look "useless" and "just as objects" and that it is related to sexism.) The sexist message in and of itself makes them feel bad and upset. Girls come to understand that these messages reflect their devalued position as females in our society, which is disturbing.

Domain 2: Girls' imitation of sexualised media

Girls feel pressured to imitate this media, both by changing their appearance to look like the sexualised media females, and by changing their behaviour, to act like the sexualised media females. Girls stated that viewing sexualised media of girls pressures them to change how they look using the following methods: (1) eating disorders and dieting; (2) plastic surgery; (3) hair, makeup, and clothing. Girls indicated that viewing this media influenced girls to act/behave sexually with boys because it normalizes and promotes this behavior for adolescent girls.

Girls provided four main reasons for why they tend to imitate this media. First, girls imitate sexualised media because they decode as true a number of supposedly positive media messages associated with this media. The first message is that the sexualised female is deemed as the cultural ideal for females. It is normal and desirable for them to change to look like this ideal (i.e., they are supposed to and it is expected of them). The second message is that a sexualised appearance and behavior enables girls to become popular and are accepted. The third message is that girls will be liked by boys if they assume this sexualised posture (being sexy is how you get a boyfriend). The fourth message is taking on a sexualised posture is a way afforded to girls to express themselves, stand out, and have a voice. The fifth message is taking on a sexualised

posture is how girls show they are confident (e.g., if girls are confident, they demonstrate this by being sexy and showing off their bodies). The sixth message is that sexualised females get positive attention from others. If girls act and look sexy, people will compliment and admire them. Lastly, the seventh message is that looking and acting like sexualised media females is how girls and women get success, fame, and respect. These media messages are intertwined and related.

Regardless of specific message, the media is saying that taking on a sexualised posture is related to positive outcomes for girls, particularly highly valued social outcomes (e.g., dating, friends, being admired and respected) in the current surroundings (e.g., at school) and in the future (e.g., career). Thus, to the extent that girls buy into these media messages, it is hardly surprising that they would try to conform in order to gain these desired social rewards.

The second reason girls gave as to why they tend to imitate sexualised media is because of social comparison processes. That is, they observe how other people in their lives (especially boys) respond to sexualised media. Specifically, they observe that boys tend to react positively to it and seem to like watching these media females. For girls this reinforces the media message that imitating sexualised media is a way to be liked by boys.

Girls also mentioned that they tend to imitate sexualised media due to fear of being judged negatively by peers**.** Girls fear that they will be judged harshly (e.g., not accepted, gossiped about) by their peers if they do not imitate (e.g., if they don't conform to this media by wearing sexualised clothing). Girls notice that other girls are often judged negatively for not measuring up to this media. Relatedly, they think that their peers have learned to judge others in this way from the media (i.e., the media teaches girls that it is normal and acceptable to judge girls based on a media-standardized sexualised appearance).

Third, girls mentioned that they imitate sexualised media females because they believe that such females in the media are supposed to be role models, worthy of emulation. The message is that if females are in the media they must be highly important and worthy individuals.

Fourth, girls said that their high level of media exposure compels them to focus on these media messages and, in turn, want to imitate. The shear volume of sexualised messages and images girls receive makes them difficult to ignore. Girls mentioned that because they are bombarded with sexualised media it makes it difficult to not internalize the associated media messages as true.

Domain 3: Consequences for girls of viewing and imitating sexualised media

Despite the media promise that, by imitating the sexualised females, girls can get desired social rewards, in reality girls who imitate this media do not necessarily reap such positive rewards and, instead, may experience a number of negative consequences. First, girls said that peers who imitate this media by being sexy run the risk of being used and hurt by boys. For example, girls may use a sexualised appearance to be liked by boys and get a boyfriend. However, boys may only show interest in them for sexual favours.

Second, girls who imitate this media may do so to be popular and fit in, but instead they may end up being socially punished. As one example, girls mentioned that they have witnessed how girls who dress and act sexy have been excluded and name-called by their female peers, perhaps because other girls are jealous or fear they will steal their boyfriends.

Third, girls said that imitating sexualised media put them at-risk of what can be conceptualized as “secondary problems,” defined as more long-term problems resulting from the negative consequences just described. Secondary problems fall into two categories, namely (a) unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and (b) psychological problems

(i.e., low self-esteem, depression, drug use). For example, girls said that another girl may use sex and act sexy to get a boyfriend. However, she may find out the boy will have sex with her, but then want nothing to do with her. This may lead the girl to feel worse about herself (e.g., have low self-esteem and feel depressed).

Despite the negative consequences associated with imitating sexualised media, girls still brought up fear of negative consequences associated with not imitating enough (e.g., not fitting in, not having a boyfriend). Therefore, they feel the need to imitate sexualised images, at least to a certain extent. That is, girls argued that sexualised females need to be imitated in order to get the social rewards, but that girls just can't go "too far." Girls described walking a fine line trying to navigate this dilemma. They needed to figure out how to imitate these images enough to be accepted and fit in, while not going so far as to be excluded or labelled. They described this navigation as ambiguous and, therefore, unfair and stressful.

Domain 4: Risk and protective factors

Girls suggested that there are some moderating factors regarding girls being influenced by sexualised media. The first factor is the age of the viewer. Girls thought that younger girls are at greater risk of negative influence from sexualised media. This is due to two developmental issues: (a) degree of cognitive sophistication (e.g., younger girls more likely to believe what they see in the media to be real; their thinking is more concrete) and (b) psychosocial (e.g., identity development; younger girls are more unsure of who they are; older adolescents having developed a more stable identity).

Second, girls mentioned the age of sexualised media model as a factor. They argued that the age of media model was related to how much influence the media has on girls. The more

similar in age was the model to the viewer, the more relevant and influential she may be for the viewer.

Third, girls cited individual differences. They believed that individual differences between girls are in part responsible for the likelihood and extent to which girls will be influenced. The differences identified included or were related to pre-existing levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. They opined that if girls already had low self-esteem and low self-confidence she may be increasingly likely to pay attention to sexualised media of females and believe as true the associated positive messages (i.e., to believe that they will be liked and admired by others if they imitate sexualised media females).

Girls also mentioned some potential protective factors that mitigate again imitating and/or being negatively influenced by sexualised media. First, they mentioned media literacy. Girls argued that media literacy teaches girls that sexualised images are unrealistic and helps them be more critical of media.

Second, girls brought up positive (non-sexualised) media models. Girls said that they would appreciate viewing non-sexualised media messages and images (e.g., teenage television stars who wear functional clothing and little make-up). Moreover, these images may serve a protective function by sending the message that not only a sexualised appearance is considered attractive.

Third, girls mentioned family influences (e.g., having parents who restrict sexualised imitation and/or media watching). For example, girls indicated that having family members who did not support sexualisation may inhibit girls from copying sexualised behaviour they see in the media because they would not want to make their family members lose pride in them. That is,

they indicated feeling pressure to behave in non-sexualised ways to be in line with their families' values and beliefs.

Fourth, girls mentioned having a non-sexualized/positive older female role model (e.g., a family member, teacher, an older female peer) may serve a protective function. Girls may look up to and imitate such older females. Girls indicated they generally want to be like these older females they look up to in their everyday life. Therefore, the older female's influence as a role model becomes more important and instructive than the media models. They may see the older female's non-sexualised behaviour as helpful in exposing for them that the positive media messages about sexualised female behaviour and appearance are incorrect (e.g., it is not necessary to take on a sexualised posture to be liked and accepted).

Lastly, girls mentioned that ethnic background may play a role. Specifically, being non-Caucasian might be a protective factor, because sexualised media females are predominantly Caucasian. That is, girls opined that they perceive a relative scarcity of non-Caucasian images in the media targeting them. Therefore, the predominantly Caucasian images of girls may not be viewed as relevant and important to non-Caucasian girls.

Diagram of the Linkages Between Themes and Categories

This concludes the presentation of the major findings of the thematic analysis. Figure 2 shows the connections between the major themes, and their categories and sub-categories as presented in the four major domains previously described.

Post-Focus Group Questionnaire Results

The results of the open-ended Post-focus group questionnaire are summarized below. Girls were free to elaborate as much or as little as they liked to each question. Some girls

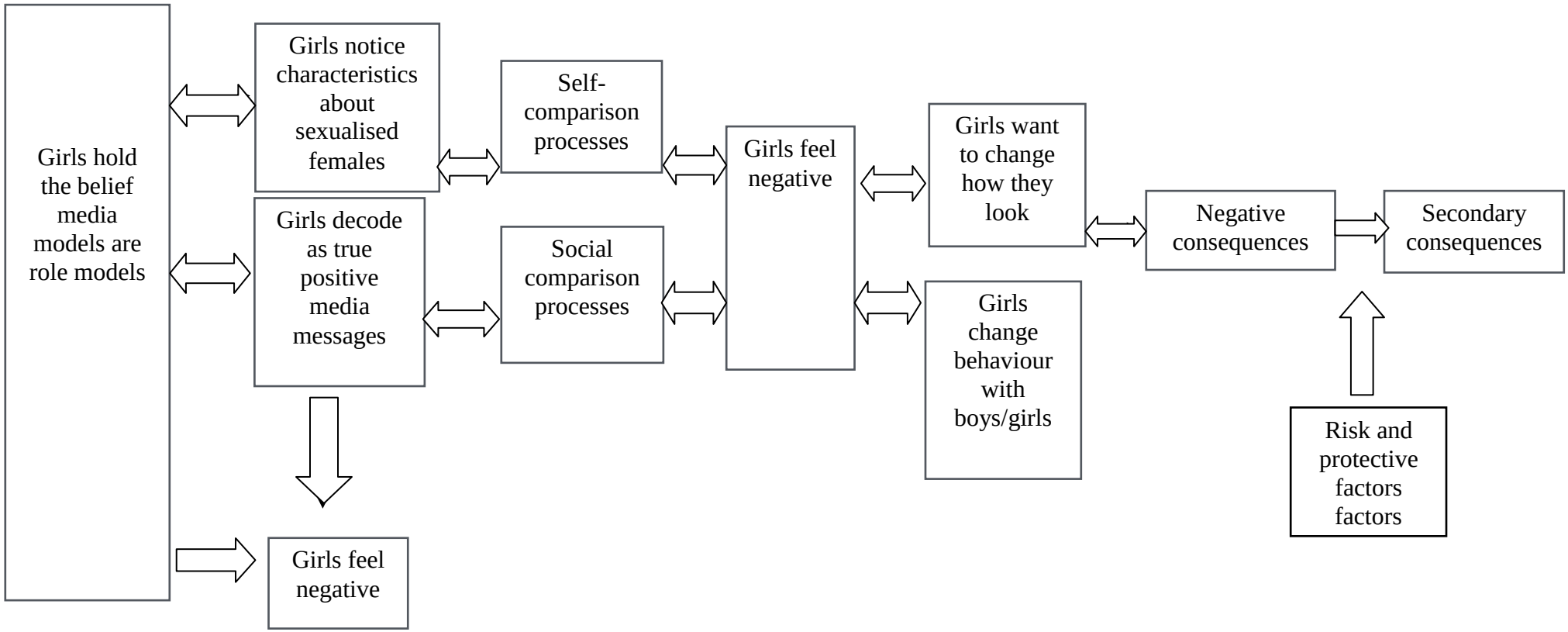

Figure 2. Diagram of Connections Between Themes Identified in the Focus Group Study

did not elaborate at all to some questions and some girls gave multiple responses to questions.

What is your ethnic background (e.g., Caucasian)? In grade 6, girls self-identified as Caucasian (16), Chinese (1), African American (1), Persian/Turkish (1), Russian/Israeli (1), Aboriginal (1), Arabian (1) and Trinidadian (1). In grade 9, girls self-identified as Caucasian (10), Native American (1), African (2), Bosnian (1), Metis (1), Asian (2), Iranian (1), and 'Brown' (1). In Grade 12, all girls indicated they were Caucasian (19), except for one girl who identified as Asian. Therefore, although most girls identified as Caucasian (73%), there was some diversity of ethnicity, predominantly in grade 6 and grade 9.

Did you enjoy participating in the focus group today? Explain/describe.

All 62 girls answered *Yes*. Not all girls elaborated on this, but many girls did. In grade 6, explanations given included "Yes, because it was fun" (nine respondents gave a similar explanation); "It was nice to talk about how we feel and hear how other people feel" (five respondents gave a similar explanation); "Yes because we got money" (two respondents); "Yes because I felt welcomed and comfortable" (one respondent); and "Yes, because Megan was nice" (one respondent).

In grade 9, similar explanations were given regarding why they enjoyed participating in the group. In particular, many girls indicated that they enjoyed having the opportunity to talk about their feelings and experiences with media, as well as listening to other girls' feelings and ideas (14 respondents). For example, explanations included, "Yes, because it is good to talk about your feelings about this;" and "It's nice to know how other girls feel about the media, and how it impacts us, without gossiping or being judged for what you say." Similarly, other participants mentioned, "Yes, because I learned other girls feel the same way;" "Yes, because it is nice to find out how other girls feel;" "Yes, it is good to talk about it and let out some steam on

this topic;" and "It is helpful to hear other girls' opinions and points of views." Four respondents indicated they enjoyed participating because it is an "important topic" to be "discussed," "learn about," and "know about." Like girls in grade 6, grade 9 participants also indicated enjoying the group because "it was fun" (three respondents). Girls also mentioned that they enjoyed the group because it took place within a "comfortable environment" without "too many other girls" (two respondents).

In grade 12, most girls elaborated as to why they enjoyed the group, offering explanations similar to the ones given by girls in grades 6 and 9. For example, most girls reported that they liked being able to express their opinions and feelings about this topic and to hear others' opinions and feelings in a safe environment (15 respondents). Girls also indicated that they enjoyed participating because it is a topic that they "care about," "feel is important," "affects girls their age," and about which it is "important to continue to learn" (seven respondents gave similar explanations).Grade 12 girls also indicated that they enjoyed the group because "it was fun" (six respondents).

In summary, all girls reported that they enjoyed participating in the focus groups. The reasons most often given by girls of all grades was because it was fun, they liked talking about their feelings about this media and hearing other girls talk about their feelings, and they think that this is an important topic worth learning about and discussing.

Did you learn anything new today? Explain/describe. In grade 6, just over half of 23 (54%) responded *Yes*. Some said that they learned "just how wrong" and "inappropriate these ads and videos are" (three respondents). Explanations given also included learning that they "can tell others [their] opinions" and that it is "okay to say what you really think about the media to others" (two respondents). One person indicated she learned that girls should "try to stop caring

what others say and think about them, because [they] are beautiful just as they are without looking like the media females." For the 46% of girls who indicated *No*, reasons stated included because they "already see this" and are "exposed to this all the time" (three respondents). All others did not elaborate on their answer.

In grade 9, roughly half of the 19 girls (53%) said that they learned something new. Regarding these girls, learning what other girls feel and think about the media was expressed most often (seven participants). The participants added that they "didn't realize that other girls found these images upsetting too" and found out "I'm not the only one who feels bad" by being portrayed in a sexualised manner in the media (five participants). Two girls indicated that they learned that the images in the magazines are not realistic/real. Regarding girls who said that they didn't learn something new (47%), reasons given included because they "already know that the media is influencing them" and they "see this media everywhere all the time" so "the images were not new to them" (four respondents). Others did not elaborate on their answer.

Similarly, in grade 12, just over half of 20 girls (55%) expressed learning something. A few girls specified that that they didn't learn anything new specifically but that they developed understanding more "in depth" (three respondents). As one girl wrote, "I learned that not everyone has to look hot for a guy to notice her- I already knew this- but it strengthened it for me." Similarly, another grade 12 girl said, "I already knew a lot, but it made my opinions stronger after hearing that the other girls agree." Explanations also included, "I didn't learn anything new per se but just talking about it with others really helped me with my self-esteem" (two girls gave similar responses) and "it was still nice to talk about it and get it out in the open" (one respondent).

In summary, girls in grade 12 stated that they learned that other girls had similar perspectives, thoughts, and feeling as them, giving explanations such as learning “it’s not just me;” “I’m not alone” or that “other girls feel the same way” (six respondents). This is similar to what girls in grades 6 and 9 reported learning. Some girls mentioned that the discussions reinforced for them that they don’t have to act and dress like sexualised media images to get boys/people to like them (two respondents). One girl said that it helped her understand the media more. One respondent mentioned that she learned that the media is promoting sexual abuse and maybe making it common. Another respondent indicated that she learned that the music videos are targeting children. One girl said that she learned that “there is actually someone who cares enough about us to study how this media affects us.”

In conclusion, roughly half of girls across grades reported learning something new. As there was no explicit intent to teach anything to the girls, the fact that this proportion is not higher is not surprising. Moreover, this finding helps to validate that, as a facilitator, the researcher was not trying to influence the participants to respond in any particular way. Rather, girls understood that the purpose of the group was to learn about their thoughts and feelings. It also helps to solidify that the thematic results are a true expression and indication of the girls’ thoughts and feelings on this topic.

For the most part, many girls indicated learning about their peers’ thoughts and feelings towards this media and, more specifically, that there are other girls who share the same opinions and feelings about it as them. Some girls indicated that they didn’t learn anything new, but that discussing this topic with their peers helped to reinforce previously held beliefs or remind them about things they learned previously about this media.

Did you think today's group was valuable? Explain/describe? In grade 6, all but two girls indicated *Yes.* Reasons given for why girls thought it was valuable included "I liked learning what my classmates' views are;" "because this media is really wrong and it is good for girls to learn to understand that and how it is affecting them;" "because it was good for the girls to talk about and discuss that they don't need to look and act like this in order to be happy about themselves or fit in or be pretty and because by doing so girls feel happier about themselves." Six participants gave responses in keeping with the above responses. For the two girls who said *No,* only one reason was given, namely "because I already see this all the time."

In grade 9, all but two girls indicated *Yes.* One reason given was "it is important to discuss with other girls how the media makes us feel negative." Similarly, another participant mentioned "it is important to talk about the pressure we feel to imitate it, but that we don't need to imitate it, look, or act like the media models to fit in and be accepted." Other participants said it was valuable because they "are always exposed to this media" (one respondent); "it has such a strong effect on girls" (one respondent); and "it is related to self-image issues and feeling comfortable with ourselves so we should be encouraged to talk about it" (one respondent). Another participant stated that the group was valuable "because the media has such a strong effect on so many girls and on society in general;" whereas another said "yes, it`s good to know we don't need to live up to these fake images and we should be our own person." Other participants wrote, "yes, because knowing these people are fake is encouraging because you don't have to change" (one respondent); "because these discussions help girls feel comfortable in their own skin" (one respondent); "because it helps you know that staying true to yourself is the #1 thing to do" (one respondent); "it made me feel more comfortable about myself;"(one respondent); and "yes, talking about this makes me feel more confident" (one respondent).

In grade 12, all girls said that they thought the group was valuable. The following explanations were each given by one respondent: “it helped me with my body image and self-esteem. It makes me feel like trying less to be better and more at being me”; “yes, because I often feel like I don’t measure up or look as good as females in the media so I take to heart all the new things I learned, and remember what I learned”; “every girl should have the opportunity to participate in a discussion like this!”; “it’s good to be reminded that acting like girls in the music videos is unrealistic”; “yes, it’s good to remember so that you don’t get sucked into it”; and “because it can help girls remember they don’t have to act and look a certain way”.

Another reason cited by girls in grade 12 for why focus group participation was valuable was that it honed their media literacy skills (four participants). For example, one participant said “yes, it helped me be more critical of media and see what it is really saying.” Another said “because it made me more aware of what is happening” and yet another participant said, “yes, it is good to discuss out loud so that we can recognize something is going wrong with the media.”

In summary, the majority of girls in grades 6, 9 and 12 found participating in the groups to be valuable because sexualised media is an issue that affects them. They reported that discussing this media helps them to be critical in their thinking about it and to feel better about themselves.

Did you feel that you could say anything at all during the group? In grade 6, all girls except for one girl said *Yes.* Most participants did not elaborate on their answer. Those who did explain said “because I felt very comfortable” (three participants); “because I trusted Megan” (one respondent); “because it’s okay to talk about your feelings” (one respondent); and because “I think it is important for people to know how we think about the girls in the media” (one

respondent). The single participant who said no stated, “because the other girls in the group might judge me.”

In grade 9, all girls except two said *Yes*. Explanations given included “because there was enough people to talk with but not too many people to feel pressure” (one respondent); and because it was a “comfortable,” “relaxing,” and “stress-free environment” (four participants). Other reasons given included “Megan genuinely seemed to care about our thoughts and opinions” (two participants); “I didn’t think these people would judge me” (one participant); and “because everyone was nice and open” (one participant). One girl said, “yes, but I didn’t contribute lots because I am just shy.”

In grade 12, all girls stated *Yes*, they could say anything. In general, girls mentioned that they felt comfortable, and that everyone was open and contributing to the conversation (six participants). As one person wrote “it was great. We had a great conversation and were all able to share our thoughts and opinions.” Other girls emphasized that they didn’t feel they would be judged by other members (four respondents). Additional single responses included “because we are all going through this”; “because we all experience this”; and “because these topics are around all of us in the media all the time”. Others individual girls felt comfortable because they knew the other girls, ``because the camera was far off” and because “Megan was really friendly and easy to talk to.” One girl said yes, but added that she didn’t speak up as much as others due to shyness. One girl said “yes, except for one thing: no one mentioned that guys are attracted to slutty type people and I didn’t feel like saying that.”

Overall, in all grades, girls almost unanimously indicated that they felt comfortable to say whatever they wanted in the group, as they found the group to be a comfortable, supportive place to discuss this media. This result suggests that the conclusions drawn from the focus group

thematic analysis are representative of girls' thoughts and feelings. Girls did not hesitate to discuss openly and truthfully their opinions in the groups.

Did you ever feel that you should not say something because it might be ridiculed/not accepted by the other girls? All girls in grade 6 except four said *No*. The former girls tended not to elaborate as to why, although some said "because there are no wrong answers" (three respondents) which had been something mentioned to the girls by the researcher at the beginning of each group. The girls who felt, at times, that they should not say something reported this was "because some of the girls are not my friends" (one respondent); and "because my friends always judge me for what I think and I hate it" (one respondent). That is, a minority of girls expressed some fear of judgment by other participants in the group.

In grade 9, all girls said *No*, with three exceptions. The majority indicated generally that it seemed like everyone was accepting of everyone else's opinions and not judging them (five respondents). One participant said, "because I don't care what people think of me." Of those girls who said *No*, one participant indicated "It was just one thing" and she "didn't say it because it involved one of the other girls in the room." The other two girls said that they wanted to say more at some points but held back because they thought it might be "offensive to other girls" in the focus group.

In grade 12, all participants answered *No*, except for one girl who said "kinda but it was more because I am shy." In general, they mentioned that all the girls seemed really open and, as one girl put it, "we fed off each others' comments" (eight respondents). Others said they felt comfortable with the people in the group (three respondents). Individual girls said "no, because no opinion is right or wrong" and that she "didn't mind if other people didn't agree with her" and

that she "didn't think others would make fun of her if they didn't agree." One girl answered *No* but that she did worry about "expressing myself properly."

Overall, most girls in all grades indicated that they spoke candidly in the groups, without fear of judgment from other girls. However, a small minority of girls admitted to withholding their opinions about topics, at least some of the time, due to worrying about being judged and/or because of not wanting to offend other girls/hurt other girls' feelings. Nonetheless, these findings suggest that the results of the focus group reflect candid comments by girls based on their true thoughts and feelings.

Did you ever feel that you could not say something because it might be ridiculed or not accepted by the facilitator? Explain/describe. All girls in grade 6 said *No*. Most girls did not elaborate on their answers, but the few reasons that were given included: "because she was really nice" (two respondents); "because I knew she wouldn't judge me" (two respondents); "because she said there was no right or wrong answers" (two respondents); "because she seemed understanding" (two respondents); and "because she made us feel we fit in" (one respondent).

In grade 9, all girls said *No,* except one. The reasons given included: "because she was nice (three participants); "seemed accepting" (three participants); "understanding" (three participants) and "kind" (two participants). One girl wrote: "she seemed very accepting of all angles and opinions." Another wrote: "she was willing to listen to anything and everything and because I trusted her." The one girl who said *Yes* explained: "kinda-only like watching swears/language." That is, she did not use swear language in her responses because she believed that the facilitator might not accept that language.

In grade 12, all girls said *No.* Reasons given included: "because she was very nice and accepting" (two respondents) and "she was very open;" (two respondents). Individuals girls

stated that “she was awesome”; “she was super understanding and never judgmental at all”; “she seemed to genuinely really want to know what we really thought so I was open and honest” “because she was so friendly”; “because she was kind”; and “because she was really easy going and listened to everyone.” One additional participant explained: “she really appreciated us and let us say what we wanted to. She really seemed to take all the answers and perspectives into consideration.” Finally, another participant mentioned: “everyone was treated equally and she was easy to talk to.”

Overall, all girls except one indicated that they spoke freely because they felt accepted by the facilitator and because they were made to feel that expressing their true opinions was important. This finding helps validate that the thematic analysis results are based on the girls honest opinions and that the researcher successfully relayed the characteristics of a good focus group facilitator (e.g., being empathic, a good listener, coming across as warm and accepting; Stewart et al., 1990).

Did you feel pressured by the facilitator to respond in any way? Explain/describe. All girls in grade 6 said *No*. Many of their reasons were similar to those given in response to the previous question (eight respondents). However, they also included “because she wasn’t calling on us like: do you have an answer?” (one respondent); “because she said no right or wrong answers” (one respondent); and “because she seemed accepting of all answers” (one respondent).

In grade 9, all girls said *No*. Reasons given by individual girls included: “because she said it was all about our opinions”; “because she assured us that she cared about our opinions and how we really felt”; “because she made it seem like any angle expressed was ok”; “because she never made us say anything”; and “because she actually made things more comfortable.”

In grade 12, all girls said *No.* Reasons given included: “because we guided the conversation” (three similar responses); “because she was really understanding and accepting” (two respondents); “because she repeatedly reminded us to speak or answer in any way” (one respondent); “because she seemed so open to anything” (one respondent); and “because a variety of opinions seemed valued” (one respondent).

Overall, focus group participants unanimously indicated that they were not pressured to respond in any way by the facilitator and that their discussions ensued from their own points of views and opinions. As before, their reports validate the findings generated from the thematic analysis.

Is there anything else about the media images you would like to the researcher/group facilitator know? Most girls in grade 6 said *No*. A few added further comments indicating that they didn’t like or agree with the media images (three respondents). For example, “yes- it’s just not right!” and “do the celebrities even want to do this or do they just get paid to?”

In grade 9, most girls said *No*, but a few girls said *Yes*. Similar to the girls in grade 6, the latter offered more information about how much they disliked this media, supporting their focus group responses (five respondents). For example, one girl wrote, “yes, I think the ideal media images are being ‘fed’ to girls and guys at a very young age and it has a negative impact.” Another wrote: “I think it is sad that the media images have such a strong effect on girls because it shouldn’t. I hope there are still some girls out there who feel like they can be themselves without worrying.” A third participant wrote: “I believe it is sad that society sells girls these fake images as the ideal. It is very disappointing.” Lastly, one girl wrote: “yes, just again that most girls don’t like looking at media images of girls like that.”

In grade 12, just over half the girls said *No* (i.e., they didn't have anything to add). Girls who said *Yes* gave the following individual responses: "yes, looking like someone in the media is an ego-boost. It`s sad but true"; "yes, it was fun, I'd be willing to do it again"; "yes, I think that if things in the media changed it would have a huge effect on eating disorders, pregnancy, abuse, prostitution rates, etc"; "yes, it is really gross the way they look and no one needs to see their parts"; "yes, I learned a lot"; and "yes: thanks!"

In summary, girls' additional responses supported several of the conclusions drawn from the focus group discussion. For example, girls added more input indicating that they do not like this sexualised media and that they think it is harmful to girls. Their comments also further strengthened the conclusion that that they found participating in the focus group enjoyable and useful. Girls did not respond to this question with any information contrary to what was given in the focus group discussion or their other responses on this questionnaire. This finding helps validate the results from the focus group analysis.

Is there anything else about today's discussion you would like to share with the group facilitator/researcher? In grade 6, all girls wrote *No,* except one participant who wrote *Yes* but failed to indicate what else she wanted to say.

In grade 9, most girls said *No*. However, one girl said "yes, it boosted me up to know other girls feel the same way." Another said "yes, that even elementary school girls have eating disorders." A third participant said "I don't think it looks like it can get any better because the media's bad effects are becoming stronger." Lastly, a fourth girl wrote, "yes, it was fun and I enjoyed it."

In grade 12, most girls said *No*. However, again, a few girls said *Yes* and made comments such as the following: “yes, I think that because of the media today kids are sexually active sooner in life and are even more pressured;” and “yes, I really enjoyed this.”

Therefore, girls’ responses to this question indicate that they enjoyed the experience of sharing their opinions and ideas in the focus group. The few *Yes* responses only add to the thematic results (e.g., that sexualised media influences teenagers to be sexually active sooner). This supports their focus group comments and related analyses are based on a full range of the girls’ ideas and opinions to the questions asked and topics raised.

Reliability and Validity

Lincoln and Guba (1985) report that there are four criteria in qualitative research that provides an appropriate standard of reliability and validity. These are trustworthiness (confirmability), dependability, credibility (plausibility), and transferability. These four criteria roughly pertain to the following concepts in quantitative research: objectivity (confirmability), internal validity (credibility), external validity (transferability), and reliability (dependability). Trustworthiness (or confirmability) refers to the degree to which the results can be confirmed or corroborated by others.

In the present study, trustworthiness was determined through the use of a second coder, who was a PhD student in psychology and trained in research methods. This coder was chosen, in part, on the recommendation of the researcher’s advisor that the student had a strong work ethic as well as exceptional analytical ability and research training. This student was trained specifically by the researcher in the steps of the qualitative analysis used for this study. They then independently coded several transcripts (roughly 10%) to develop open codes and document the emergence of major themes. A comparison of the researcher’s codes and the second coder’s

indicated satisfactory overlap and similarity. When comparing codes, it was clear that initial codes were similar and consistent.

The dependability of the analysis is akin to reliability in quantitative research (the assumption of replicability or repeatability) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability was evaluated by the overall consistency of themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data. That is, do any of the findings contradict? Are there any themes that don't make sense, given other themes? The thematic findings are generally all consistent with each other. There are no instances of a finding that cannot be made sense of given other findings. Additionally, as already mentioned, the second coder`s and the researcher`s interpretations of a portion of the transcripts were compared. This comparison indicated strong consistency, thereby demonstrating dependability.

Credibility refers to establishing that the results are plausible (believable) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stringer et al., 2004). The first test of credibility involved the use of the post-focus group questionnaire. This questionnaire assessed potential influences that may have led to distorted reporting during the interview (e.g., feeling threatened by another participant; socially desirable responding). As mentioned previously, the questionnaire data provides credibility as to the soundness and accuracy of the girls' discussion and clarifies that the participants spoke candidly and truthfully.

Credibility (accuracy/soundness) of the girls' responses was also established by first checking videotapes of the focus groups for evidence that no girls dominated the discussion. Establishing that certain dominant personalities did not overwhelm the discussion also increases the credibility of qualitative focus group findings by ensuring that all possible perspectives and opinions were taken into account (Stringer et al., 2004). The videotapes were also checked to

ensure that no interruptions or deviations to plan may have unduly influenced the results (e.g., having the principal or boys join the discussion; being in a room where the presence of boys is heard and known (e.g., boys knocking on the door or calling in to the focus group from the hall). No red flags were identified.

Credibility was also established through triangulation. Triangulation is defined as a validity procedure in which the researcher searches for convergence amongst different sources of information (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This involves using multiple methods of data collection and/or sources of data to corroborate research outcomes. In the current study, the girls` responses on the Pre-focus group questionnaire regarding the media images were triangulated with their focus group discussion. The self-report questions and the focus group interview questions were created to address the same issues (e.g., do girls feel pressure to imitate media images)? Congruence in research findings from both data collection methods increased the credibility of the research. Both provided evidence that sexualised media images negatively influence girls; that girls are pressured to change their appearance to look like sexualised media females; that girls think this media influences their behavior with boys and their peers; and that girls think sexualised females represent a cultural ideal for girls and women.

Demonstrating “diverse case analysis” (i.e., running focus groups with participants from diverse ages, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds and finding similar findings) also helps establish credibility/plausibility (Stringer et al., 2004). It does so because multiple interpretations of the data are explored with diverse girls. This helps ensure that all possible perspectives of individuals affected by the research problem are taken into account. The credibility of the current study was enhanced by sampling from a diverse population of adolescent girls in terms of age (early, middle and late adolescence). However, the study is

limited in that it is not diverse in terms of social class and ethnicity (focus groups participants were predominantly Caucasian, middle-class teenage girls).

Lastly, transferability refers to the degree to which results can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings, similar to external validity. Transferability can only be achieved through future research in which present-day findings are both corroborated and/or applied to new contextual environments. However, the current study facilitates transferability by thoroughly describing the research procedure and findings so that future researchers can test the transferability of the results.

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) work has been critiqued. Specific criticisms include their terminology (i.e., 'trustworthiness' versus validity and reliability) and the evaluation of their reliability and validity criteria occurring at the end of qualitative studies instead of taking place continuously throughout (e.g., Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). Nonetheless, Lincoln and Guba's criteria continue to be accepted and used widely in current focus group research (e.g., Chioncel, Van Der Veen, Wildemeersch, & Jarvis, 2003). To ensure that rigour was evaluated continuously throughout the present study (rather than just at the end), attention was paid to the impact of the researcher on the focus group process. The following reflexivity section outlines this.

Reflexivity

I am a Caucasian, middle-class, 33-year-old female. At the time that I conducted the focus groups, I was 29 years old and was about five to six months pregnant. I was born and raised in Winnipeg, and completed all my schooling (elementary, junior high, and high school) within one of the school divisions that agreed to participate in this study. Due to the many differences between me and the girls who participated, namely being an adult, pregnant, and functioning in my interactions with them within my role as a doctoral-student researcher, I was very likely viewed as an 'outsider' to the girls in the study. However, I can also identify with,

and feel a personal tie, to the focus group participants, due to being female, Caucasian (as were most of the girls in the study), and by fact that I was once, not so far in the distant past, also a middle class teenage girl residing in Winnipeg. Although many changes have occurred within our culture, society, city, and school division since I was a teenager, I likely have insight, at least to a certain extent, of the lived experience of the girls who participated in the focus group study and, as such, can see that I am in some ways an 'insider'.

I read many academic research articles and books on the role of gender and media on adolescent girls' mental health and emotional wellbeing prior to conducting the focus groups. Being well versed in the field's scientific literature created assumptions within me regarding what focus participants might say. For example, awareness that there is empirical evidence that media exposure to cultural ideal female images negatively influences females in a number of ways (e.g., body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem) created the assumption that some girls would likely mention such issues in their discussions.

I have, for the past 10 years, worked in various positions as a therapist/counsellor, including specialized work with adolescent girls. My work as a therapist also created assumptions regarding what girls might talk about in the focus groups. As a therapist counselling teenage girls, I have heard many girls discuss their struggles with self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, and developmental issues (such as identity formation). Girls undergoing therapy with myself have discussed the media as one source of these struggles. Thus, listening to adolescent girls as a counselor caused me to assume that some girls certainly are negatively affected to varying degrees by media targeting them.

It is because I am someone who cares deeply about adolescent girls that I work as a therapist with girls and that I am interested in social-cultural factors that might be harmful to

girls. My feelings of care and concern for the focus group participant(s) likely affected the interjections I made during the focus group interviews, my listening skills, and my nonverbal behaviour with girls. Caring about girls allowed me to listen actively to the girls: to hear them out, to honour their wisdom, and to value their words and stories. The interjections/comments I made throughout the interview were generally encouraging and indicated support for them speaking openly and honestly. My facial expressions generally come across as warm and inviting (smiling, nodding). Thus, my caring feelings towards the focus group girls likely enhanced girls' openness and honesty in discussing their thoughts and feelings in the groups.

The aim of the focus group study was to understand how girls are influenced by being targeted by sexualised media. Thus, the study itself was grounded in the overarching assumption that girls are living in a sexualized culture and that being targeted by sexualised media influences their development in some way. Girls do not grow up in a social vacuum, but are instead influenced by the culture in which they live. This assumption influenced the questions I asked in the focus group interview, which concerned finding out to what extent, and in what ways, the media influences girls.

My thesis stemmed from my interest in girls' and women's mental health, and is closely tied to my values and identity as a feminist. My feminist assumptions, values, and beliefs also influenced my thesis. My thesis is grounded in the basic feminist assumption that North American society is patriarchal (i.e., a society structurally dominated by men and the oppression of women for men's gain) and that women and girls suffer certain injustices on account of their sex. As a feminist, certain concepts structure my worldview. These include the obvious truth that gender discrimination (unfair/unequal treatment of women, for example by the law) and gender stereotypes (i.e., negative generalizations/misconceptions about girls and women) exist in North

American society. It is due to my feminist values and beliefs that I am concerned about the potential negative implications that sexualised media may have on girls. A desire to want to better understand if and how this is so, and a desire to learn from my thesis in order to better help girls if this is the case, led me to ask the research questions guiding my thesis.

Being aware of my values, assumptions, worldview, and personal experiences allowed me to take a conscientious step back throughout the entire research process, especially during data analysis. Insight into my own values, assumptions, and biases allowed me to ask myself questions to ensure, as much as possible, that my interpretation of the data, and the emergent themes, was not being unduly influenced by my prior held assumptions. I made lots of reflective notes regarding the role my values and assumptions may have had on the research process throughout the stages of collecting and analyzing the focus group data. I reflected on my role as researcher by asking myself questions such as, “What do I think I “know” from this transcript/these participants? How do I think I “know” it?” I also routinely asked myself, “What else could be said here? Is there another way to interpret it?” For example, although I assumed, based on the research literature and also my work as a therapist with girls, that some girls are negatively influenced by sexualised media, I reminded myself that this research is important due largely to the fact that we do not know how girls today respond to this media; some theorists have argued that girls may be empowered by such media. This helped me stay open-minded while reading and analyzing the focus group transcripts. I was also fortunate to have research assistants I could converse with about my ideas and perspectives while completing data analysis. These peer debriefing conversations helped enforce slowing down, stepping back, and using good critical thinking and analytic skills so that I was not interpreting what was being said based on prior assumptions and beliefs.

Discussion

Quantitative Content Analyses

Seventeen magazine advertisements. Overall, 24% of children, 64% of teenagers, and 73% of adults were sexualised. For both children and teenagers, the proportion of sexualisation increased from 1992-2008, with a higher proportion of sexualisation in recent years (2004-2008) than in earlier years (1992-1996). This supports the suspicion held by many scholars, theorists, researchers, and other professionals that sexualisation of girls is becoming increasingly commonplace in North American media (e.g., American Psychological Association, 2007; Zurbriggen & Roberts, 2013). This finding is consistent with other content analyses of magazine content that have showed that sexualisation of girls is increasing over time (Graff, Murnen, & Krause, 2013).

No children were strongly sexualised. Overall, 4% of teenagers and 7% of women were strongly sexualised. For both teenagers and women, the proportion of strong sexualisation increased from 1992-2008, with a higher proportion of strong sexualisation in recent years (2004-2008) than in earlier years (1992-1996). However, when sexualisation was present for teenagers, typically it was not the type considered to be degrading, offensive, or violent. On one hand, this is good news. On the other hand, still a sizeable minority of advertising images of teenage girls were judged to be offensive, degrading or violent. The fact that these types of depictions are increasingly prevalent is arguably highly concerning. This is because media images may influence viewers' values, beliefs, and attitudes towards girls, which in turn may influence their treatment of girls. Viewers may come to accept sexual harassment and violence towards girls as normal and acceptable when witnessed by others, and in turn, not intervene to stop it. Viewers may also be more apt to sexually harass girls or become sexually violent towards them.

The proportion of images of infantilized women in the total sample of advertisements was only 2%. Nonetheless, this increased from 1% in 1992-1996 to 5% in 2004-2008. The fact that this form of sexualisation of girls was less prevalent than other forms (i.e., images of actual girls being sexualised) may reflect a general cultural pattern. On the other hand, it may be that images of infantilized women are simply found less often in magazines targeting girls, as opposed to media targeting different audiences (e.g., older, male audiences). Infantilized images may be more appealing to men than to teenage girls and, therefore, used by advertisers to sell products to the former rather than latter. One concern related to images of infantilized women is that they may be linked to paedophilic interests in men (APA, 2007). Given this concern, it would be warranted to analyze these types of images specifically in media targeting male viewers.

Ethnicity. The present content analysis results increased our knowledge base regarding the intersection of sexualisation and ethnicity in media. In Seventeen magazine, Caucasian females were presented far more often than African-American and Hispanic-American females, which may be a function of the target audience of the magazine. Seventeen magazine has a readership that is predominantly Caucasian (http://www.seventeenmagazine.com/). According to the Seventeen magazine website, in 2014, of 3,651,000 readers, only 635,000 are Hispanic-American and 437,000 are African-American. Advertisers are likely aware that, on average, more Caucasian girls are reading Seventeen and, therefore, attempt to sell clothing, make-up, and accessories to Caucasian girls using predominantly Caucasian models.

The under-representation of Hispanic- and African-American females in the sample of advertisements may reflect racism in the U.S. towards darker-skinned individuals. Linking Caucasian skin colour to ideal beauty (i.e., the idea that lighter skin is more beautiful) has been

argued to indicate racism and prejudice (Masi De Casanova, 2004). In addition to the exclusion of minority females from fashion media, an associated phenomenon is “whitewashing,” defined as digitally retouching the skin tone of African-American and Hispanic-American females to appear lighter in magazines, advertisements, and other media (Kite, 2011). It would be interesting to see if the content of magazines specifically targeting and created for African-American or Hispanic-American females (e.g., the magazine Ebony) differ from Seventeen magazine in the prevalence of African-American females and their levels of sexualisation. This possibility remains unknown until future research is conducted.

From a sociological perspective, sex and sexuality are tied to race and class inequalities/stereotypes in society (APA, 2007; Anderson & Taylor, 2008). For example, historically, African-American women have been seen as sexual animals, openly available to Caucasian men (Anderson & Taylor, 2008). Therefore, it was hypothesized that sexualised media representations of African-American girls may conform to these stereotypes. Contrary to what was expected, the present study did not find that a higher proportion of African-American and Hispanic-American girls were sexualised in Seventeen magazine. Similar proportions of Caucasian and African-American girls were sexualized. Too few images of Hispanic-American girls were coded to enable comparisons to be made.

The fact that similar proportions of both Caucasian and African-American teenagers in advertisements were sexualised might indicate that sexualised attractiveness as an ideal has become a general cultural phenomenon for adolescents girls, regardless of ethnicity. That is, although historically sexualisation was tied to minority status, sexualisation as a cultural ideal for female attractiveness has now become mainstream and normative.

In the present research, Caucasian adults were more often sexualised than were African-American adults. One explanation of this may be that viewers have come to accept a sexualized identity as normal for Caucasian females throughout their lifespan. In contrast, viewers may now see roles other than sex object as acceptable for African-American women. A third possible explanation has to do with the nature of the type of ads in which women were portrayed (recall that teenagers as opposed to women were more frequently used to sell beauty products and clothing to the adolescent readers), as well as with racism and power. Ethnicity has been linked to levels of power depicted in ads (Kilbourne, 1999). African-American individuals, relative to Caucasian individuals, are infrequently portrayed in positions of power in ads. Thus, one can envision how an interaction between sexualisation, ideal female beauty (as discussed previously linked to Caucasian skin colour), ethnicity and power, and target audience could manifest in differences in levels of sexualisation between African-American women and Caucasian women. As an example, an ad might depict two teenage girls and their mothers (one pair African-American and the other Caucasian). Both teenage girls are modeling sexualised clothing in an attempt to sell it to adolescent viewers. The mothers could be present in the ad simply to give context to the story being told in the ad. The advertisement may portray the Caucasian mother (and by implication the Caucasian teenage model and her family) as more powerful by dressing the mother in fancier, more attractive clothes (which tend to be sexualised by today's standards). In contrast, to portray the African-American mother as having less power, the advertisement may depict her as more plain (i.e., wearing less attractive clothes, which by today's standards tend to be non-sexualised).

Finding similar proportions of sexualisation for both African-American and Caucasian females (all ages) in Seventeen magazine contrasts with Graff, Murnen, and Krause (2013). In

their analysis, they found that there were more sexualised clothing depictions (number of sexualised characteristics coded) of racial /ethnic minority females than Caucasian females in Seventeen magazine content (including both ads and articles). One possible explanation for this is differences in sexualisation by ethnicity between magazine advertisements and article content. All magazine content was coded for sexualisation by Graff, Murnen and Krause, but only ads were coded in the present study. Perhaps articles appearing in Seventeen magazine were more apt to sexualize African-American females than were advertisers, reflecting biases held specifically by Seventeen magazine editors and writers.

Age. Pre-adolescent girls appeared far less in Seventeen magazine advertisements than did teenage girls and women. As Seventeen magazine is primarily read by adolescents, it makes sense that they would mostly use adolescents in ads selling clothing and beauty products to girls this age. It may be that the lower proportion of sexualized pre-adolescent girls in Seventeen magazine ads simply reflects this targeted marketing. One implication of this is that marketing aimed at this younger audience may contain many more sexualized pre-adolescent girls.

As mentioned earlier, in the current research children were less often sexualized than were adolescent girls and women. This finding is similar to Graff, Murnen, and Krause's (2013) content analysis finding that pre-adolescent girls had fewer sexualising characteristics than teenagers and adults. This may mean that there remain some normative societal sanctions against sexualising pre-adolescent girls. Nonetheless, a sizeable portion of these very young girls still were sexualised, the highest proportion being in the latest (2004-2008) time period, which warrants concern. A media environment that sexualises young girls may promote and/or normalize unhealthy, even violent and dangerous ideas about young girls and their sexuality. For

example, it may lead boys and men to see young girls as sexual beings, open to sexual activity (Levin & Kilbourne, 2008).

Given that Seventeen magazine targets primarily adolescents, it may be that media targeting pre-adolescent girls (such as pre-teen magazines, television shows for preteens), specifically, would have higher rates of sexualised children than media aimed at older audiences. To determine if pre-adolescent girls are more often sexualised in media targeting a younger age group, future research will need to be conducted examining media aimed at a younger audience. One such study was Goodin et al.'s (2011) content analysis of sexualising characteristics in girls' clothing (i.e., clothing sizes 6-14, generally aimed at "girl-children"). Overall, they found that 30% of such clothing was sexualised. This was a slightly higher proportion of sexualized characteristics for pre-adolescent images than found in the present study (24%), although this difference is only slight and, therefore, may not be meaningful.

Music Videos

The present research showed that, overall, 13% of children, 58% of teenagers, and 73% of adults were sexualised in music videos. This is consistent with past research documenting a very high level of sexualisation of women in music videos. For example, a review of empirical research published even in earlier years (the 1980s and 1990s) examining the sexual content of music videos (Andsager & Roe, 2003) indicated that regardless of how sexual content was operationally defined, or the music genre (e.g., rap, country), females were routinely sexualised in music videos. It also suggests that, regardless of platform (magazine ads or music videos), the same trends are emerging. Girls and women are being bombarded by the same messages from every direction. The proportion of sexualised teenagers and adults in videos was higher in every period from 1992-1996 to 2004-2008. This supports the belief of many professionals that

sexualisation of adolescent girls is becoming increasingly commonplace in North American media (e.g., American Psychological Association, 2007; Zurbriggen & Roberts, 2013).

Overall, 3% of children, 10% of teenagers, and 36% of women were strongly sexualised. The proportion of strongly sexualised teenagers and adults increased across the time periods. On one hand, it may be viewed as good news that, when teenagers are sexualised, it is not usually in a strongly sexualised manner. On the other hand, the fact that an increasing proportion of teenagers were portrayed in demeaning, violent, or offensive ways is highly concerning. Demeaning, violent, and offensive media images may influence viewers' values, beliefs, and attitudes towards girls. Viewers may come to condone sexually degrading and violent sexual treatment of girls by others. Further, viewers may model their own behaviour towards girls after such media.

Ethnicity. As expected, a higher proportion of African-American females (51%) were sexualized than were Caucasian females (41%). It was hypothesized that this would be the case, given that historically African-American females have been seen as sexual animals, openly available to Caucasian men (Anderson & Taylor, 2008; Kilbourne, 2000). Therefore, it was expected that sexualised media representations of African-American females would conform to these stereotypes. This current finding is consistent with past findings that African-American females, in particular, are sexualized at very high rates (Ward, 2013). Music videos, in particular, have been implicated as depicting high levels of strong sexualisation, including sexual violence and "pimp" culture (i.e., normalizing and promoting prostitution) (Ward, 2013). It suggests that African-American girls exposed to music videos may be at heightened risk for negative consequences of sexualised media (e.g., low self-esteem, attitudes accepting of girls and women as sex objects).

Age. As was the case with magazine ads, pre-adolescent girls (5%) were portrayed less often than were teenagers (17%) or women (79%). This may reflect the demographics of viewers of MTV music videos, which includes adults as frequent viewers. As adults watch MTV music videos, in addition to younger audiences, it makes sense that many of the females found in the videos were adult. Producers may target their adult audience with adults in music videos because they believe that such viewers prefer to see females of similar age to themselves (i.e., as opposed to children). It may also be that producers prefer to use sexualised depictions, including strongly sexualized depictions of females engaged in sexual intercourse, because they believe that will increase the popularity of their videos, particularly among male audiences. Cultural sanctions against children having sex may pressure producers to limit their use of under-age females in videos.

As mentioned previously, proportionally fewer pre-adolescent girls were sexualised in music videos than were teenagers or adults. Nonetheless, a sizeable minority of young girls were in fact sexualised. This is alarming. Although children are not the main viewers of these videos, they can still have an effect on girls by potentially influencing the attitudes of older viewers. For example, adults who see sexualised girls in music videos may come to accept this sexualisation of children as normal and be more likely to buy their female children sexualised clothing and toys (that is, take part in their self-sexualisation). Such adults may also accept aspects of our culture that are sexualising of young girls (e.g., child beauty pageants).

Sexualising pre-adolescent girls is also concerning in terms of normative sexual desires for adults. For example, adult male viewers who see sexualized girls in the media may be increasingly likely to sexually fantasize about young girls or look at girls in a sexualised way. At the extreme, such media may encourage pedophilic interests and behaviours in men by

normalizing pedophilic desires and decreasing taboos against adult sexual interest in children. Future research would need to examine the veracity of these concerns. For example, researchers may want to examine the factors contributing to the promotion of pedophilia aimed at girls.

Comparisons between the Two Media Forms

There were a number of similarities in prevalence rates found between Seventeen magazine advertisements and music videos. First, in both media sexualisation and strong sexualisation of teenage girls has sharply increased. Second, strong sexualisation occurred less often in both media than sexualisation that was not degrading, violent, and offensive. Third, in both media, infantilization of women has been increasing, although this form of sexualisation of girls occurred less often than actual girls being sexualised. Fourth, it was found in both media that pre-adolescent girls (under age 12) were sexualised and strongly sexualised less often than were teenagers and women. These many similarities may indicate similar underlying dynamics in North American culture.

Differences were also found concerning trends in sexualisation of girls in Seventeen magazine ads and music videos. As expected, African-American girls were more often sexualised than were Caucasian girls in music videos. However, this was not found for magazine advertisements. This may be related to different target audiences for music videos and the magazine ads. Whereas Seventeen magazine ads predominantly target Caucasian girls, music videos do not. For example, as previously mentioned, many of the music videos were specifically of the hip hop and rap genres, which are considered “African-American” music with roots in African-American sub-culture in the U.S. (Ward, 2013). Past research has found that portrayals of women in these African-American music genres are particularly highly sexualized, often portrayed in degrading and offensive ways (e.g., sexual violence, mysognynistic attitudes)

(Ward, 2013). For example, Jones (1997) analyzed the prevalence of violent and sexual imagery in 203 videos of diverse genres from four cable channels. He coded items such as fondling, simulated intercourse, and hot pants. Jones found that the levels of such imagery were highest in hip hop or rap videos. As an example, 58.3% of hip hop videos were coded as featuring women dancing sexually, compared to 7.8% of rock videos.

Another difference was that, in magazine advertisements, the proportion of Caucasian adolescent girls who were strongly sexualised was higher in recent years (2004-2008) than in earlier years. Due to low cell sizes, comparable analyses concerning the proportion of African-American females were unable to be run. Conversely, in music videos, the proportion of Caucasian adolescent girls who were strongly sexualised was not higher in recent years than in earlier years. However, the proportion of African-American strongly sexualized adolescent girls was higher in more recent years. These differences highlight that various media genres (music videos, magazines) are not entirely homogenous. They have different purposes (e.g., primarily to sell products vs. primarily to entertain) and different demographic target audiences (e.g., ethnic composition). These differences may well be related to differences concerning certain trends in sexualisation of girls. Video producers, more so than product advertisers, appear far more inclined to show graphic sex acts, perhaps for shock value, to entertain viewers and keep them watching. This appeared to be particularly so in hip-hop and rap genres featuring a higher proportion of African-American females of all ages.

Another difference between Seventeen magazine ads and music videos was that teenage girls were portrayed less often than women in music videos whereas, in Seventeen magazine, teenage girls are portrayed more often than women. As discussed above, this may reflect the demographics of viewers of MTV music videos, who include adults, in addition to teenagers, as

frequent viewers. This may indicate that scholars such as Gill (2012) are correct in asserting that the media is not monolithic and homogenous. Gill says that there is a diversity of different media platforms, genres, and products, and suggests that there may be differences and contradictions in sexualised messages across the media content. Future researchers examining sexualisation of girls should continue to examine multiple media forms in order to make comparisons.

Overall, the findings from the quantitative content analyses support the concerns expressed by theorists and scholars (e.g., APA, 2007; Choate & Curry, 2009) that sexualisation of girls has been increasing in the mass media. It provides empirical evidence to support the many anecdotal examples of girls being sexualised in media (APA, 2007; Zurbriggen & Roberts, 2013). Increasingly, girls are being sexualised in both magazine advertisements and music videos. Such sexualisation has reached levels unheard of even 20 years ago.

Focus Groups

This present study gave voice to adolescent girls, helping us learn from their experiences and shedding light on the messages they internalize from sexualized socio-cultural media influences. Overall, the focus group findings offer support for the concerns expressed by researchers and scholars (e.g., APA, 2007; Levin & Kilbourne, 2009) that media sexualising girls is influential (i.e., girls imitate it) and harmful to them in a number of ways, including fostering low self-esteem, negative body image, eating disorders, and risky sexual behaviours.

Body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, dieting, and low self-esteem. One of the main findings from the focus groups is that that this media makes girls feel negatively about themselves. More specifically, girls said that viewing sexualised media was related to negative psychological issues, including negative body image (body dissatisfaction), eating disorders and dieting, and low self-esteem.

The above finding is consistent with past research showing that adolescent girls, in comparison to boys, disproportionately experience eating disorders, depression, body dissatisfaction, and low self-esteem, all consequences associated with sexualisation (e.g., APA, 2007; Choate, 2009; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2002). Littleton and Ollendick (2003) reported that negative body image and body dissatisfaction, experienced predominantly by females, peaks during early adolescence. Levine and Smolak (2002) found that body dissatisfaction is so widespread among adolescent girls that it is best characterized as "normative discontent." Illustratively, studies utilizing quantitative self-report questionnaires have provided evidence that, in their respective samples, 81% of 10 year old girls said they were afraid of being fat (Mellin et al., 1991); 46% of 9-11 year old girls said they were sometimes or very often on diets (Gustafson-Larson & Terry, 1992); and 70% of normal weight girls in high school said they feel fat and are on a diet (Ferron, 1997). Dieting is associated number of potential psychological and physical health consequences for adolescent girls (Canadian Paediatric Society, 2004). Although few studies have been conducted with girls, studies in adult dieters suggest that chronic dieting is associated with a number of psychological effects including food preoccupation, distractibility, irritability, fatigue, and a tendency to overeat, or even binge eat (Polivy, 1996). These results may well also apply to girls. More worrisome is that adolescent dieting is one of the most common antecedents to anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa (Patton, Carlin & Shao, 1997; Patton, Selzer, Coffey, Carlin, Wolfe, 1999). Adolescent dieting is also associated with physical health problems, including nutritional deficiencies (particularly iron and calcium) (Canadian Paediatric Society, 2004). Even marginal reductions in caloric intake in adolescence can be associated with growth deceleration (Pugliese, Lifshitz, Grad, Fort & Marks-Katz, 1983). Another consequence of chronic dieting in adolescent girls, even without meeting diagnostic

criteria of an eating disorder, is osteopenia and osteoporosis (i.e., progressive bone diseases that are characterized by decreased bone mass and density, which can lead to an increased risk of fractures) (Kripe & Forbes, 1990). Bone disease is a long-term risk for adolescent female dieters, even without menstrual irregularity and amenorrhea characteristic of eating disorders (Selzer, Caust, Hibbert, Bowes & Patton, 1996)

The role of sexualised media in contributing to low self-esteem is particularly concerning because low self-esteem is associated with a multitude of health-compromising behaviors in adolescence, such as substance use, early sexual activity, eating problems, and suicidal ideation (APA, 2007). For example, one longitudinal study examining the predictive association between self-esteem in New Zealanders 9-13 years of age and a variety of health compromising behaviors at age 15 found that low self-esteem significantly predicted adolescent reports of problem eating, suicidal ideation, and multiple health-compromising behaviors (McGeer & Williams, 2000). This study also showed that low self-esteem made girls susceptible to other health problems and may make them more vulnerable to sexualised images. Diminishing self-esteem arising in early adolescence may make girls particularly vulnerable to cultural messages that promise them popularity, effectiveness, and social acceptance through the right “sexy” look (APA, 2007). Their dropping self-esteem may reflect how responsive they are to these cultural messages. This two-way relationship between self-esteem and the sexualized media (both a contributor and consequence) mirrors what focus group participants opined in the present study. Focus group participants mentioned that low self-esteem is both a risk factor increasing the likelihood girls will be influenced by sexualised media and a consequence of exposure to sexualised media.

Overall, arguably media models for girls that reduce them to sexual objects, as well as messages that devalue girls according to limiting sexual stereotypes, hinders the accomplishment

of important developmental tasks, such as creating a healthy, constructive sense of self. This puts adolescent girls at-risk of multiple negative health consequences (APA, 2007). The finding from the focus groups that girls perceive media sexualisation as a factor contributing to the development of health problems for girls supports this train of thought.

Plastic surgery. Another finding is that girls imitate sexualised media by attempting to change their appearance to resemble sexualized media females. Focus group participants indicated that girls who watch sexualised media are inclined to desire plastic surgery to look more like the media females they are observing. They notice that many of the sexualised female media models have had plastic surgery and they perceive this phenomenon as normalizing plastic surgery for girls. Further, they indicated that girls' desire to do so in order to be liked, fit in, and accepted by others. This finding is line with some past research. For example, the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS, 2013) reported that teenagers and adults give different reasons for having plastic surgery. Teens view plastic surgery as a way to fit in and look acceptable to friends and peers. Adults, on the other hand, more often see plastic surgery as a way to stand out from the crowd. There is also evidence that plastic surgery is being increasingly sought out by females under the age of 18. According to the ASPS, in 2012, more than 236,000 cosmetic procedures were performed on adolescent patients, including more than 75,000 surgical procedures such as nose reshaping, breast lifts, breast augmentation, liposuction, and tummy tucks. One of the concerns about plastic surgery on adolescents is that their bodies are still maturing. According to ASPS, very few epidemiological studies or clinical trials have been conducted to examine the risks for teens of these procedures. The long-term physical and emotional impact of such cosmetic surgeries is unknown.

Sexual behaviour. Focus group participants opined that girls who view this media are likely to imitate it via engaging in early sexualised behaviours (e.g., sexual intercourse). They further said that sexualised media is promoting specific values and beliefs about sex, including that sexual behaviours resemble pornography, that sex is causal, and that sex is acceptable without feelings involved. This is in line with past research on the topic of media exposure and sexual behaviours in adolescents. For example, research indicates adolescents often turn to media to learn about sex and sexuality. Two-thirds of adolescents turn to media when they want to learn about sex (Buckingham & Bragg, 2004). Further, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2008), adolescents age 12-14 who had a high "sexual media diet" were 2.2 times more likely to have sexual intercourse when 14-16 years old.

Exposure to sexual content in television has been linked to adolescent risky sexual behavior. For example, one study found that adolescents who watched television shows with high levels of sexual content were more likely to become sexually involved, and to become pregnant or get a girlfriend pregnant (Martino et al., 2008). These authors explained that such shows seldom incorporate any information on the risks, responsibilities, and consequences of sexual behaviour. Focus group participants spoke directly to this issue. Girls indicated that those who imitate sexualised media by engaging in early sexual activity also find themselves being negatively affected in the long-run through problems such as pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Girls opined that the media normalizes, promotes, and even glorifies adolescent sexual behaviour, but does not portray the negative consequences that may also occur.

Grade 12 participants mentioned that girls text sexual messages to boys, often with negative consequences, such as being excluded and ridiculed following doing so. Most adolescents have access to electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, computers) and newer

technologies, such as social networking websites. These newer technologies may have changed the way adolescents behave. For example, in regard to “sexting” (sending sexual text messages), one study found that 4% of adolescents age 12-17 have sent sexually suggestive, nude, or nearly nude, photos or videos of themselves to someone else via text messaging (Lenhart, 2009). As another example, a national U.S. study found that 37% of adolescent females age 13-19 have sent or posted sexually suggestive messages via media forms such as text messaging (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2008).

Sexual harassment and violence. Another focus group finding was that girls believe that sexualised media, at the extreme, promotes values, attitudes, and behaviours that are sexually violent. Sexualised media may play a role in why, after puberty, girls become increasingly at-risk of being targets of sexual harassment and abuse (i.e., subject to incidents of unwanted sexual activity, including sexual attacks and sexual touching) (Purcell & Zurbriggen, 2013). According to anonymous, representative, telephone surveys in the United States, one in four girls will be sexually assaulted before the age of 18 (Finkelhor, Hotaling, & Smith, 1990). Moreover, teenage girls age 16-19 are three times more likely to be victims of rape than women in the general population (Rennison, 2000). When a girl is sexually victimized, ranging from sexual harassment to rape, she is literally being treated as a thing or object by the perpetrator (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Unhealthy, violent, and dangerous ideas about sex may be promoted and, to some extent, even normalized in a media environment that constantly sexualises girls (Levin & Kilbourne, 2008).

Decoding positive media messages associated with sexualisation. Focus group participants indicated they imitate sexualised media because they decode as true a number of supposedly positive media messages associated with it. The first message is that the sexualised

female is the cultural ideal. Moreover, it is normal and desirable for girls to change to look like this ideal (i.e., they are supposed to and it is expected of them). The second message is that a sexualised appearance and behavior enables girls to become popular and accepted. The third message is that girls will be liked by boys if they assume this sexualised posture (being sexy is how you get a boyfriend). The fourth message is that taking on a sexualised posture is a way afforded to girls to express themselves, stand out, and have a voice. The fifth message is that taking on a sexualised posture is how girls show they are confident (e.g., if girls are confident, they demonstrate this by being sexy and showing off their bodies). The sixth message is that sexualised females get positive attention from others. If girls act and look sexy, people will compliment and admire them. Lastly, the seventh message is that looking and acting like sexualised media females is how girls and women get success, fame, and respect in their future endeavours. Regardless of the specific message, generally the media is saying that taking on a sexualised posture will produce positive outcomes for girls, particularly highly valued social outcomes (e.g., dating, friends, being admired and respected) in the current surroundings (e.g., at school) and in the future (e.g., career).

The above results concerning media are highly consistent with other qualitative research findings regarding the main messages embedded in sexualised media (e.g., APA, 2007 Carpenter, 1998; Merskin, 2004). For example, Merskin (2004) concluded that the messages from advertisers and the mass media to girls (as eventual women) included that it is normal and acceptable for others to view them as sexual objects. Similarly, Andsager and Roe's (2003) review of how female sexualisation was presented in music videos indicated that the messages sent to girls include that what is most important for them is being sexy and attractive; that showing off their sexuality and body to fulfil male fantasies is how they demonstrate that they

are self-confident; and that female power comes from the power to “flaunt” sexuality. Andsager and Roe argue that music videos teach girls that their success and power will be based upon becoming sex objects and performing sexually for men, not from their talents or abilities.

Similarly, APA determined that at least four studies have examined the sexual content of teen girls’ magazines (Carpenter, 1998; Duffy & Gotcher, 1996; Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998). Across studies, the most dominant theme was that being sexually desirable and gaining the attention of males was most important for girls. Girls were repeatedly sent the message that if they change by losing weight, learning sexual techniques, applying make-up, and dressing sexy they can gain love and attention.

Thus, the present results confirm that girls accurately decode the same messages that qualitative researchers have identified in sexualised media. This finding casts light on the claim that researchers and others concerned about media sexualisation of girls are being “adult-centric” (Thompson, 2011). Adult-centric refers to the assumption that children share the same meaning that adults attribute to particular behaviours and understand them in adult terms. Thompson argued that behaviour APA (2007) and others (e.g., Olfman, 2009) consider inappropriate for children (i.e., to represent sexualisation) is based on a negative adult construction of sexualised behaviours as harmful. In her view, sexualised behaviour by girls could be understood as the harmless mimicking of behaviours associated with adults, de-contextualized from adult meanings. However, the present findings indicate that girls as young as grade 6 do, in fact, interpret the meaning of sexualised media messages in similar fashion as adults.

Support for theoretical mechanisms of influence. Additional focus group findings are consistent with, and provide support for, a number of theoretical models of sexualised media influence on girls’ health, wellbeing, and development. First is cultivation theory (Gerbner &

Gross, 1976; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorelli, & Shanahan, 1994). Cultivation theory is a socio-cultural theory of media influence which proposes that, as individuals consume more and more media, they come to cultivate (i.e., adopt) the beliefs about the real world that coincide with the "media" world. That is, the more media consumption, the more consumers believe that the content promoted by the media is realistic. Girls' responses were reflective of this theory. They opined that they are very aware of the sexualised context of media targeting them and that they are highly immersed in this sexualised media. Girls thought that this media was so influential (i.e., it led them to believe the sexualised media messages and act accordingly) in part due to the shear level of inundation (i.e., they see this media and its messages over and over again).

The focus group results are also in keeping with social learning theory (Bandura, 1994). According to social learning theory, girls are more likely to imitate behaviour of models that is rewarded (Bandura, 1994). The focus group respondents opined that they perceive the mass media as pairing sexualised images of girls with valued social rewards, such as popularity and relationships. This encourages girls to be preoccupied with physical appearance and sex as a means to multiple desired ends. Also according to social learning theory, girls are most likely to imitate models that they perceive are similar to them, such as by age and ethnicity. Grade 12 participants in the focus groups opined that the more similar in age was the media female to the girl viewing the media, the more likely was the viewer to imitate her. They implied that this was because the media female would seem most relevant to their lives due to her similarity in age.

The results also support objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Objectification theory starts with the premise that girls in Western society observe this sexualised cultural milieu and, through repeated exposure to cultural messages, as well as

personal experiences, they internalize it. Consequently, girls begin to objectify themselves (APA, 2007). As this occurs, girls begin to focus on their bodies from a third-person (e.g., "How do I look and seem to others?") rather than a first-person perspective (e.g., "How do I feel? What do I think?") (Choate & Curry, 2009). In other words, girls accept the sexualised treatment by others and treat themselves as objects to be looked at and evaluated. The focus groups findings are in keeping with this theory. For example, girls mentioned that one of the negative consequences of media sexualisation of girls is that it makes them worry about how they look and seem to other people. In addition, girls make choices on behaviour, style, and appearance based upon what they think others desire, as opposed to what they desire for themselves.

The thematic results also supported identity formation theory, related to how and why sexualised media influences girls. Identity formation theory argues that identity development is the major psychosocial developmental challenge of adolescence (Erikson, 1968). During early adolescence, girls begin to differentiate from their families of origin and look to popular culture, media, and peers to gain an understanding of who they are, who they want to be, and where they want to fit in (Bowen, 1978). Strasburger and Wilson (2002) describe pre-adolescents and adolescents as being like “actors” experimenting with identities or roles from those offered within the culture. This makes girls actively engaging in identity development vulnerable to sexualised marketing and media messages (Pipher, 1994). Focus group participants indicated that identity development during adolescence is responsible for why some girls are more susceptible to media sexualisation influence than others. Focus group participants opined that younger adolescent girls were more at-risk because they are most actively asking themselves questions related to “Who am I?” Focus group participants argued that, as girls approach the end of adolescence, their identities have generally become more stable. They thought this made older

adolescent girls less at-risk of turning to the media to answer “Who am I? “ questions and experimenting with sexualised roles offered by the media.

Thematic results are also in keeping with cognitive developmental theory (Piaget, 1957). Child cognitive development passes through a number of stages that advance their ability, for example, to understand what is real and think symbolically about things. Children’s immature cognitive development may affect their ability to critically process and understand cultural messages. For example, APA (2007) cite researchers who argue that very young children are highly at-risk of marketing influence (e.g., Borzekowski & Robinson, 1999) and they have difficulty distinguishing between commercial and regular programming on TV (Atkin, 1982). They indicate that children age eight and younger generally cannot recognize that the purpose of advertisements is to persuade them to want to purchase something (Kunkel & Roberts, 1991). In keeping with this, focus group participants mentioned that they thought that even elementary school girls are susceptible to the influence of media sexualisation because they are too young to understand that what they see is not real (e.g., they are unable to comprehend that images are digitized due to their immature cognitive development).

APA (2007) also points out that young girls’ understanding of sexuality is limited by their cognitive development. They remark that pre-adolescent girls are unable to fully understand the meaning behind the sexuality depicted by adolescents in the media. Consistently, focus group respondents indicated that they thought young girls (e.g., pre-adolescents) in particular were at risk of imitating sexualized behaviour they see in media because of their inability to understand its implications. As an example, grade 12 girls reported that pre-adolescent girls wouldn’t necessarily understand that imitating sexualised media females would make them look sexual.

Instead, they thought that young girls simply want to look like media singers to whom they look up and do not understand the sexual connotations of their appearance and behaviour.

Developmentally, media sexualisation may also interact with the physical changes girls are experiencing. The body changes that occur with puberty, and how others respond to them, can make girls feel awkward and uncomfortable (Pipher, 1994). Brown and Gilligan (1993) argue that, at puberty, adolescent girls more frequently experience sexualised evaluation and objectification. As they do so, they learn that their body belongs more to others than it does to them. Instead of providing an environment that teaches girls (and boys) to value and respect female bodies, our media-saturated culture exploits and demeans female bodies (i.e., views them as only sexual objects, devalues what female bodies can do in other domains such as physical activity). For girls, sexual development within this context may lead to insecurity and shame (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). In keeping with this, girls opined that sexualized media makes them feel increasingly worried about living up to a sexualized standard, because they feared being judged negatively by their peers.

Adolescent peer relationships, as well as the developmental challenge of establishing friendships, may make adolescent girls vulnerable to media sexualisation. Fitting in with, and being liked by, peers is important to most girls (Bunker Rosdahl & Kowalski, 2007), which may leave them vulnerable to media sexualisation if they believe they can use clothes and other products to accomplish these goals (Brown, 1991). If the media pair sexiness with being popular, girls can be expected to imitate what they see (Linn, 2004). Focus group participants frequently brought up the pressure to imitate sexualised media in order to fit in and believing that they would not be accepted by others if they did not attempt to do so.

One theory that was not supported by the focus group findings was social comparison theory, a socio-cultural theory (Festinger, 1954). This theory holds that people are subconsciously driven to look outside themselves to others to evaluate their own opinions and abilities. People are motivated to do so because they believe the images portrayed by others are desirable, obtainable, and realistic. Social comparisons are usually upward. In other words, people tend to compare themselves to others who they deem more attractive and successful than themselves. For girls, this may well involve comparing themselves to media models portraying a nearly impossible, sexualised attractiveness, but which may appear reasonable and achievable to girls. However, girls in the focus groups did not posit that they believed that the sexualised media images were easily obtainable or realistic. The girls indicated that they felt the images were not easily obtainable and, as such, they felt it was unfair to be told to strive to achieve such a standard of attractiveness. Further, although girls mentioned that perhaps young girls, due to their more limited cognitive sophistication, may see these images as realistic, focus group participants themselves were widely aware that these media images had been altered and were, therefore, not realistic representations of females.

The fact that multiple theories for how sexualised media influences girls were supported by the focus group findings indicates that a comprehensive theoretical understanding, bridging the various theories, is necessary to understand the wide-ranging impact/influence of media sexualisation on girls. Overall, the socio-cultural theory termed objectification theory (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997) may be viewed as the most comprehensive (and therefore useful) framework for understanding how the cultural milieu of sexual objectification of females influences girls' development and health. This theory combines the premises of other theories, including that girls in Western society observe this cultural milieu and, through repeated

exposure to cultural messages (cultivation theory, Gerbner et al., 1994), as well as personal experiences (social learning theory, Bandura 1994), are lead to internalize it. Internalizing sexualisation (treating and valuing oneself as a sexual object) is denoted as antithetical to meeting developmental challenges for girls (e.g., positive identity formation, healthy sexuality) (Erikson, 1950).

In conclusion, focus group results support a number of psychological theories by which media sexualisation influences girls' health and development (APA, 2007; Hatch, 2011; Roberts, 2013). The focus group findings indicate that a comprehensive framework is needed to understand the influence of media sexualisation on girls and as such, objectification theory (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997) may have the greatest relative utility of the various theories, due to its comprehensiveness; other theories (i.e., social learning theory, cultivation theory) alone are unable to provide a complete picture of the influence of media sexualisation on girls.

Thematic differences by grade. Across all grades (6, 9, and 12), similarities were noted concerning what girls notice about sexualised media, their interpretation of media messages, their beliefs about how sexualised media influenced them, the reasons they imitate it, and the ways in which they imitate it. However, there were some differences by grade. Generally this resulted from grade 6 girls responding differently than did girls in grades 9 and 12.

One difference was that girls in grade 6 were less apt than older girls to notice that sexualised media was getting worse. This may have been due to grade 6 girls not having the same amount of experience as did older girls with sexualized media to make such comparisons. In keeping with cognitive developmental factors described earlier, it may also reflect the lack of cognitive reflexivity afforded younger girls (Piaget, 1957).

Another difference was that, on the pre-focus group questionnaire, grade 6 girls reported less agreement with the belief that sexualised media females represent culturally ideal attractiveness. Again, this may be because early adolescent girls comparatively have had less exposure to these images and, as such, have had less time to learn this media message and internalize it. This hypothesis is in keeping with cultivation theory (Gerbner & Gross, 1976) which, as mentioned earlier, suggests that, over time, repeated exposure to cultural messages leads to agreement with and internalization of those messages.

Yet another difference was that grade 6 participants reported imitating the media differentially than older girls. Grade 6 girls are less likely to behave sexually with boys. Instead, they imitate with style (e.g., clothes, hair, make-up). This difference may be explained in terms of physical developmental differences in early versus late adolescent girls. Early adolescent girls are generally beginning puberty and only beginning to develop secondary sex characteristics, such as breast development. Therefore, imitating sexualised media via drawing attention to their breasts may be an avenue unavailable to them. It may also be explained in terms of sexual/relationship developmental milestones of adolescence. As girls progress through adolescence, they increasingly become interested in dating and sexual relationships (Linn, 2004). Generally, this is a gradual progression. Therefore, it makes sense that girls beginning adolescence would not behave sexually to the same extent as older girls.

Yet another difference was that grade 6 girls did not discuss the potential negative consequences of imitating (e.g., boys may not, in fact, like you and want to date you if you take on a sexualised posture but instead be interested only in sexual favours). This may be because grade 6 girls have had fewer opportunities than older girls to imitate sexualized media and, thus, have had fewer opportunities to observe any potential negative consequences of doing so.

One final difference was that grade 9 girls, in comparison to grade 6 and 12 girls, reported significantly higher agreement on the pre-focus group questionnaire that sexualised images make them feel positively about themselves (although, overall, they still expressed little agreement with the question). One reason for this may be that grade 9 girls are commencing imitation of sexualised media (e.g., sexualised behaviour), in the hopes that doing so will bring the desired positive social consequences (e.g., get a boyfriend, be popular). They may not have imitated these behaviours long enough to determine if it will bring about the desired positive consequences, or have experienced potential negative consequences. If so, they may well feel slightly more positive and hopeful. Girls beginning to imitate sexualised media, believing positive consequences will result, may feel empowered to be given via media a route to follow to get what they want and feel better.

Implications for Prevention and Health Promotion

Hopefully, the findings from this study will help researchers and others learn from girls' experiences and develop interventions to counteract harm associated with media sexualisation. More precise knowledge of girls' understanding of, and responses to, sexualised media targeting them may be important for developing disorder-prevention and health-promotion programs. Development of media literacy programs combating the influence of sexualisation, specifically, may be a good place to start. Tiggemann et al. (2013) have called for the development and widespread implementation of media literacy programs that include information about media sexualisation of girls and women to mitigate harm associated with such sexualisation.

Several studies have suggested that media literacy programs can reduce negative psychological effects, including preventing internalization of a thin ideal (Irving, DuPen, & Berel, 1998) and protecting against negative body image (e.g., Levin & Murnen, 2009;

Zurbriggen & Roberts, 2013). For example, “In Favor of Myself” is one such preventive program (Golan, Hagay, & Tamir, 2013). In Favor of Myself is a community-based, media literacy program that focuses on enhancing positive self-image, body image, eating attitudes, and behavior of young adolescents. The program consists of eight interactive sessions on a number of topics. For example, they include consumer culture of Western society and its impact, adolescence as a period of transition, attractiveness and its various aspects, and body image and self-esteem. Golan et al. (2013) conducted a controlled trial to evaluate program acceptability, efficacy, and effectiveness among 259 participants (210 in an intervention group and 49 in a control group) aged 12-14. It was found that the program significantly reduced drive for thinness, self-worth contingent upon others’ approval, and the gap between current body figure and ideal figure. Further, those in the intervention group were significantly more able to recognize media strategies, the role of media on desire to change body shape and size, and the influence of the media on self-confidence and drive for thinness. As another example, Wilksch and Wade (2009) evaluated a media literacy prevention program delivered to mixed-sex, young adolescents. Five hundred and forty grade 8 students (mean age 13.6 years, SD 0.4 years) from four schools participated. Eleven classes received eight sessions of the media literacy program (126 girls and 107 boys). Thirteen comparison classes received their normal school lessons (147 girls and 160 boys). Shape and weight concern, as well as seven eating disorder risk factors (e.g., dieting, media internalization), were measured at baseline, post-program, and at 6-30 months follow-up. The results of linear, mixed model analyses using a 2 (group: media literacy, control) X 3 (time: post-program, six month follow-up, 30 month follow-up) X 2 (sex: boys or girls) mixed within-between design, with baseline entered as a covariate, were highly significant. Main effects for group, favouring the media literacy program, were

found for shape and weight concern (effect size, ES = .29), dieting (ES = .26), body dissatisfaction (ES = .20), ineffectiveness (ES = .23), and depression (ES = .26). The authors concluded that media literacy can be an effective intervention for reducing shape and weight concern, as well as other eating disorder risk factors in an adolescent population.

The current qualitative focus group results may provide useful information for designing the content of literacy programs aimed at media sexualisation. First, girls as young as grade 6 already indicate they are being negatively influenced. Therefore, media literacy programs should be developed for girls younger than grade 6. Second, the observed grade differences suggest that some age-specific tailoring of literacy programs may be warranted. For example, younger girls may have more difficulty understanding that sexualized images as not real. That is, they may be less able to understand that images are altered through digitizing (e.g., females made to look thinner, changes to hair colour, eye colour, skin colour). Therefore, elementary school may be a good time to raise their awareness about this. Similarly, grade 6 girls indicated less agreement than older girls that sexualised images were considered culturally attractive. Therefore, a good time to intervene regarding this media message is with girls in grade 6, or at least prior to grade 9, before a belief in this message had become more strongly formed.

Generally, the attitudes and beliefs discussed as most strongly influenced by the focus groups participants may inform what is most important to target with media literacy programs. Participants revealed which media messages are most salient and influential for them. One such message was that being sexualised leads to popularity. Programming could focus on helping girls distinguish the falsehood from the truth inherent in these messages. Programming could also help girls recognize more healthy means to achieved desired ends.

Having older girls actively participate in prevention programs for younger girls may increase their effectiveness. Focus group participants mentioned that positive, non-sexualised older girls can act as a protective influence against sexualised media messages. Younger girls look up to older girls, listen to what they have to say, and deem their opinions as important and worthy of attention. Therefore, having older girls play a role in the delivery of media literacy programs may enhance their effectiveness. For example, high school students could talk to elementary school students about the role of sexualised media in their own lives and about negative effects they have experienced first-hand. This could bring the research evidence to life for younger girls and make a more lasting impression.

Health promotion programs aimed at improving self-esteem in adolescents may also be beneficial with adolescent girls to ward off negative consequences of media sexualisation. Low self-esteem was implicated as a risk factor for being negatively influenced by, and imitating, sexualised media. Therefore, it may prove beneficial to provide self-esteem enhancing programs prior to adolescence in order to hopefully create hardiness and resilience to media sexualisation, thereby protecting girls from its harm as they proceed through adolescence. Self-esteem could stand alone as a health promotion program aimed at girls, or self-esteem could be incorporated into media literacy programs as a module. For example, in the context of media literacy, the influence of media images on girls' self-esteem could be examined. Program participants could discuss the motives of advertisers and media producers in keeping girls disliking themselves in order to sell products to improve their shortcomings.

Sexual health is another topic that may be useful to cover in health promotion programs aimed at mitigating the negative effects of media sexualisation. Focus group participants opined that girls start to imitate media sexualisation via sexual behaviour in junior high. Therefore,

intervening with media content aimed at decreasing imitation of sexual behaviours may be an important component of programs aimed at this age group. Further, junior high is when participants indicated that girls are most vulnerable to media influence. Therefore, this age group may warrant the most intensive intervention. The influence of sexualized media on healthy sexual development in adolescence could be incorporated into existing health sexuality classes delivered to students as part of the school curriculum. Conversely, it could be incorporated into media literacy programs. A module specific to the influence of media on sexual behaviours, attitudes, and values regarding sex could be developed.

The results also warrant raising awareness among parents regarding media sexualisation of girls as an important part of prevention efforts. Girls mentioned that family members who act as non-sexualized role models serve a protective function against media sexualisation. Providing parents with information about the negative effects associated with media sexualisation may help open up communication between parents and daughters regarding negative media images, which may also act as a protective mechanism against their harm.

Zurbriggen and Roberts (2013) call for educators and others to do more to prevent strong forms of sexualisation, specifically sexual harassment of girls, by peers in schools. They argue that bullying and violence prevention programs and policies already standing in schools should incorporate protecting students from sexual harassment and violence. For example, Zurbriggen and Roberts cite research findings that, according to students, teachers do not intervene enough to stop sexual harassment in schools when it does occur. The findings from the present focus groups are consistent with this claim. In the present study, one group of grade 12 girls discussed a recent incident at school in which girls were sexually harassed by boys yet nothing was done by teachers to stop the harassment or punish the boys.

Bay-Cheng, Livingston, and Fava (2013) discuss the importance of fostering what they refer to as “relational hardiness zones,” defined as spaces where girls can talk with each other, not just spaces were adults provide information to girls, about sexualisation. They are places for exploration and discovery that foster the kind of supportive friendship these authors and others (e.g., Petersen & Hyde, 2013) argue might be important in buffering the negative effects of peer sexualisation. The responses girls gave on the post-focus group questionnaire support the need to develop such spaces. Girls indicated that they thoroughly enjoyed participating in these focus groups. Many said that they believed that all girls should be given opportunities to discuss their opinions, beliefs, values, and feelings about sexualised media with other girls. Their responses further indicated that, although they want these opportunities, they are not currently receiving them in their school or other contexts. Many girls reported that the focus group was the first time they had ever had the opportunity to talk candidly about their experiences and to hear other girls’ opinions and feelings about this media. Thus, girls repeatedly emphasized that they appreciated having a place in which they could safely discuss these issues, be heard, and trust that their opinions would be valued and accepted, without direction from adults.

In addition, findings from the focus groups may inform the work of therapists counseling girls who are experiencing problems associated with sexualisation, including depression, low self-esteem, and eating disorders (APA, 2007). Therapists may find it beneficial to explore with girls the role of sexualisation in their lives, via the media and other spheres (e.g., peers, self-sexualisation). Therapeutic contexts could be another safe, supportive space for girls to explore their perspectives about growing up in a sexualised media culture.

Lastly, the current results may also have implications for social policy regarding constraining media aimed at children through regulation and/or other means. Arguably, steps

may be necessary to decrease the depiction of sexualised messages about girls, particularly because the results of the content analysis confirm that girls are being increasingly exploited via marketing and media strategies. Girls indicated that decreasing the number of sexualised depictions targeting girls could reduce negative consequences, like low self-esteem, eating disorders, and early sexual activity.

In general, the focus group discussions highlighted that the routes by which girls are impacted by media sexualisation are multi-faceted. The influences are both direct and indirect, and the consequences are both primary and secondary. Therefore, it is unlikely that any one intervention will be sufficient. The problem will require a multi-level, long-term response, including prevention programming, social policy changes, efforts on the part of parents and teachers, and provision of safe, empowering spaces for girls to talk about their experiences with cultural sexualisation.

In all realms, it will be important to include girls as part of the solution. Adults would be wise to seek out their ideas regarding creating prevention initiatives and changing the media landscape. This present study highlights the intelligence, insightfulness, and openness of the girls who participated in the focus groups. Their ideas and input, as well as those of many other girls, will likely increase the effectiveness of prevention and health promotion efforts.

Limitations

Quantitative content analyses. One limitation of the content analyses is that the cross-sectional design does not allow any statements regarding possible causal relationships about sexualisation of girls in the media and/or why sexualisation of girls may be increasing. Future research will need to be conducted to answer these questions.

Another limitation of the content analysis concerns creation of the magazine sample. In creating the sample, the researcher needed to decide if the sample would be drawn from the same magazine (Seventeen) across the whole time period or from different magazines published at different times. On one hand, if the researcher sampled the same magazine titles for the full 15 years, many magazines that are newly published (e.g., Cosmo Girl) would be excluded. On the other hand, if different magazines were sampled, uncontrolled variability would be introduced (e.g., differences target audience). Ultimately, the choice was made to use the same title of magazine (Seventeen) for the entire time period because it appeared representative of similar target audience magazines (e.g., Teen Vogue). Nonetheless, the bottom line is that the magazines examined were not randomly sampled from all magazines available to girls. Thus, the study results may not generalize to those magazines not sampled.

The content analysis was limited to two media genres. The study did not sample media such as television, videogames, TV commercials, or movies. Therefore, the results do not necessarily generalize to these media genres. However, the many similar results from both genres sampled supports the proposition that sexualisation of girls is similar across different media types. Nonetheless, the finding that there were some differences in presentation of girls and their sexualisation by media type supports the need to look at a wide variety of media forms targeting a variety of audiences, and not to generalize results from one media form to the next without testing for possible differences.

Another limitation of the study was that, due to small cell sizes, many desirable comparisons between groups (i.e., age groups, ethnicities) could not be made. Unfortunately, this meant that information about trends involving certain ethnicities (e.g., Hispanic-American) and age groups (e.g., children) could not be obtained. Regrettably, this decreased the amount of new

knowledge generated regarding the intersection of sexualisation, age, and ethnicity.

Focus groups. In regards to the focus groups, the first limitation concerns generalizability. The researcher intended to sample girls more broadly in order to examine differences by socio-economic status (SES). However, due to denial of access to several school divisions, the sample was limited to girls from predominantly middle-class areas, the majority of whom were Caucasian. Thus, the results are not necessarily generalizable to girls from other social class and ethnic backgrounds. It may be that girls of different backgrounds would respond differently. For example, lower SES girls may be more apt than affluent girls to notice the amount of money that is necessary to buy the beauty products and clothing that help create a sexualised appearance, and feel angry or sad because of this. As another example, as the risk of sexual exploitation is higher in impoverished areas generally (Weseley, 2009), media sexualisation of girls may put poor girls at even greater risk of sexual harassment and abuse by boys and men, in comparison to more affluent girls.

Similarly, if the focus groups had been conducted with predominantly non-Caucasian girls, the discussions may have reflected different content. Ethnicity was cited by some girls as a factor mediating the influence of media sexualisation. For example, girls mentioned that being Metis (in Canada, defined as an individual of mixed Aboriginal and European descent) may protect girls to some extent against the influence of media sexualisation, although the reasons for this were not clearly stated. One possibility is girls of Metis background see they are under-represented in this media and, therefore, may not think that the images and messages are relevant to them. Similarly, the results of the content analysis show that, in both music videos and Seventeen magazine, very few First Nations females are portrayed. Thus, it is possible that, if focus groups had included significant numbers of Metis or First Nation Canadians, the content of

the discussion may have been more centred on their feelings and opinions about being under-represented.

Another limitation is that the focus groups were conducted with 62 girls from a small sample of classes in schools. The 62 girls who participated were those that returned consent forms to their teachers within the time limit given and were able to participate in groups at the three pre-determined times. It is possible that there is something different about girls who signed up versus those who did not. The characteristics of the girls who did not participate, including why they did not participate in the study, is unknown. It is reasonable to assume that, for some girls, the reason they did not attend the focus groups was due to scheduling conflicts with other activities (the researcher was told that this was the case by some girls). These girls may not have differed in any noteworthy way (e.g., characteristics, opinions) than the girls who did participate. However, girls who were interested in participating may have already had an interest in media representation of girls and women. Therefore, they may have been already more critical of sexualised portrayals of females than girls who chose not to participate. Also, perhaps they had parents who are well-informed of, and concerned about, media influences on girls. Such parents may have been comfortable with, or even encouraged, their daughters' participation. If this is the case, the girls in the focus groups may have been less likely than their peers to have been negatively effected by, and accepting, of sexualized media.

Girls in the focus groups generally indicated on the pre-focus group questionnaire that their peers were more negatively affected by this media than they were. This likely indicates socially-desirable responding. That is, girls were under-reporting their true level of influence by media messages. Thus, another limitation is that their responses concerning this aspect of the questionnaire may have underestimated the true influence of media sexualisation. Attempts were

made to decrease the socially desirable responding (e.g., by ensuring confidentiality). However, this questionnaire was answered close to the beginning of the focus group procedure, when girls were likely at their most socially anxious (e.g., wondering what the group discussion would be like, wondering what other girls would say). Further, because adolescents are generally in a state of heightened self-consciousness, the mere presence of others may have triggered socially desirable responding. Social desirability bias is a potential limitation associated with all research utilizing self-report questionnaires (Holtgraves, 2004).

Another potential limitation is that the researcher did not measure girls' pre-existing levels of media involvement, as well as psychological variables of interest (e.g. their self-esteem, eating behaviours, and body image), using well-established questionnaires with adequate test properties. On one hand, in hindsight, it might have been interesting to know about these factors (as they came up in the focus group discussions) assessed with standardized measures. Self-esteem, for example, may have been related to the girls' responses and may have varied by grade. However, it was not realistic to increase the demands on participants. This would have almost certainly decreased the number of girls available to attend the groups, because the time required to participate would have increased (e.g., groups were ran directly after school hours; longer times would have cut into dinner times and other activities). Moreover, the longer the group participation, the less enjoyable it would have become (attention spans may have waned, boredom increased). In turn, this could have reduced the quality of the focus group discussion (e.g., less dynamic discussion, less participation). Thus, in the end, a decision was made to emphasize group discussion rather than measurement.

Lastly, there are limitations associated with all focus group research, and care was taken to address them. One main weakness of focus groups as a method of data collection is that

sessions can be overshadowed by a small number of domineering personalities (Mooney et al., 2004). Less vocal participants can find it difficult to express their opinions. However, every effort was made to ensure that all participants were included in the discussion (e.g., reminding girls that all responses would be valued, that the researcher wanted to hear from all girls). Moreover, the researcher assessed this possibility in the initial analysis of the focus group tapes to determine if girls did not unduly dominate the discussion, which they did not.

Strengths

Quantitative content analysis. One strength of the content analysis was the steps that were taken to ensure validity and reliability. For example, operationalization of sexualisation was based upon the definition and conceptualization of sexualisation in the literature, thereby providing construct validity. Having blind coders to the research questions also increased the validity of the results. Moreover, adequate reliability of the coding questionnaire was achieved prior to the analysis, using standard methods in content analysis research. Further, relatively the large media sample size permits valid generalization to at least two genres of media (Seventeen magazine, MTV music videos) targeting girls.

Another strength of the content analysis was assessing more than one form of media, which permits credible comparisons between the two forms.

Yet another strength of the content analysis was that different forms of sexualisation of girls were measured (e,g., infantilization of women, in addition to girls themselves being sexualised). This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of media sexualisation of girls.

Focus groups. One of the strengths of the focus group component of the present study is that the results reflect girls at different stages of adolescence. This allows comparison of girls at different stages in an attempt to understand any developmental differences.

Another strength of the focus groups is that ethnicity was assessed via the post-focus group questionnaire. This provides for understanding the ethnic composition of the girls in the focus groups which, as described previously, is important for understanding limits to generalizability of the results.

Yet another strength of the focus groups was the care taken to ensure adequate reliability and validity. A second coder was recruited to code a portion of the focus group transcripts. The high degree of concurrence between the primary and secondary codes provides for trustworthiness/credibility and dependability/reliability of results. Plausibility was determined via girls completing anonymous self-report questionnaires to measure influences that may have affected the validity of girls' responses. Many detailed, rich quotations are provided to support each of the major themes, so readers can assess for themselves the trustworthiness of the conclusions. The use of pilot groups to fine-tune the group process and instruments increased the credibility of the results. The credibility was also enhanced by the adequate number of focus groups used to reach saturation and the diversity of the participants by age/grade.

Future Directions

In regard to future directions, researchers could assess the prevalence and nature of sexualisation of girls in other media types/sources. The proposed study did not sample media such as television, videogames, TV commercials, or movies. It also did not assess "new media" forms such as social networking sites (e.g., facebook, twitter). Examining these media would provide a more complete picture of the sexualised media landscape for girls.

It would also be valuable to study the prevalence and nature of sexualised girls in more recently created magazines aimed at girls, such as Teen Vogue and Cosmo Girl. Similarly, another avenue of future research would be to assess the prevalence of sexualisation of girls in

music video award shows targeting teenagers specifically. For example, MTV recently created its “Teen Choice” awards. This award show is very similar to the MTV award show whose nominees were analyzed for the present study. The MTV Teen Choice award show specifically targets young viewers and nominees are voted on by teenagers age 13-19. The nominees include a higher proportion of teenager performers, as opposed to adult performers. Recall that in the music video sample for the present study, there were far more adults than there were teenage girls.

Future researchers could also examine the prevalence and nature of sexualisation aimed at pre-adolescent girls in particular. Lamb and Brown (2006) and Linn (2004) have expressed concern about sexualised content in movies and television for young children. For example, the Disney females of today (e.g., Pocahontas) compared to yesterday (e.g., Cinderella) appear to have more cleavage and wear fewer clothes. In order to address this observation, studies of media targeting young girls specifically should be conducted. Future researchers should also study the impact of media sexualisation on younger girls. Young girls may be particularly vulnerable to marketing and media because most girls under the age of eight do not cognitively understand that the purpose of an ad is to get them to buy something (APA, 2007; Linn, 2004). Young children believe what they see and do not understand that the child in the ad is being paid to behave in a certain way and wear certain clothes. Some research questions that future researchers may want to address in research with younger girls include: When does the understanding of sexualisation as an ideal develop in girls? When do girls start to understand that the media images have been altered? When do they start to understand that the media is depicting cultural ideals concerning beauty for girls as if they were of utmost importance? Do young girls

believe what they see concerning sexualised females and, if so, when does this happen developmentally? What impact, if any, does media sexualisation have on pre-adolescent girls?

In the future, researchers may also want to examine the influence of sexualised media on boys and men. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model, media sexualisation influences girls to a significant extent indirectly via other socializing agents (e.g., men), who in turn influence girls directly (e.g., via sexual violence) (APA, 2007). Future research testing how media sexualisation of girls influences boys and men would provide a more complete picture of how sexualised media indirectly influences girls. For example, does viewing sexualised media images of girls relate to paedophilic interests by men, or influence sexual harassment and victimization of girls by boys at school and/or in the community? When boys and men are frequently exposed to sexualised media messages about girls' place in society, they may begin to adopt these attitudes and view girls as objects, not as people. As this occurs, it may become increasingly acceptable to boys and men to treat girls in disrespectful and sexually degrading ways (Lamb & Brown, 2006). In turn, this may lead to psychological distress for girls. Focus group participants reported that, increasingly, boys expect girls to look and act like sexualised media females, which encourages sexual harassment. Some future research questions related to this finding include: What messages about girls are boys reading into this media? At what age and to what extent are boys noticing sexualised media about girls? Does it influence their attitudes and beliefs about what constitutes normal behaviour in girls?

Future researchers could also conduct focus groups specifically, and other qualitative research generally (e.g., interviews, ethnography), with girls of other ethnicities and social classes. As mentioned earlier, the girls in the present focus groups were predominantly

Caucasian and from middle-class neighbourhoods. Research with other populations is necessary to see if the results of the present study are generalizable to other groups.

Future researchers may also want to conduct focus groups specifically, and other qualitative research generally, with girls comprising at-risk or clinical populations, such as girls with low self-esteem or eating disorders. Focus group participants implicated sexualised media in the development of eating disorders and low self-esteem. They also suggested that pre-existing low self-esteem as being a potential risk factor for being negatively influenced by media sexualisation of girls. Research with girls experiencing these problems would assesss to what extent these perceptions are accurate.

Similarly, focus group participants implicated media sexualisation as playing a role in encouraging early sexual behaviours in teenagers and, as a consequence, negative health effects such as pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Researchers may want to interview girls who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour and/or those who have become pregnant or contracted sexually transmitted infections to hear their perspectives on the role media sexualisation of girls has played in their sexual health decisions.

Lastly, longitudinal research should be done to test the variables, and their trajectories, that focus group participants opined as potential risk and protective factors regarding media sexualisation. For example, girls implicated low self-esteem as a potential risk factor, and ethnicity as a potential protective factor, for negative consequences. Future researchers may also want to conduct quantitative research with larger population-based surveys that include a more comprehensive and representative sample of girls. Future research findings that are consistent with the present findings and converge across a variety of methodologies increase the validity of the research conclusions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, 20 years ago Dr. Mary Pipher, in her best-selling book Saving Ophelia (1994), documented and discussed the cultural climate in which girls are growing up and its likely negative effects on girls. She wrote:

"American culture has always smacked girls' right on the head in early adolescence. This is when they move into a broader culture of "isms," such as sexism, capitalism, and lookism, which is the evaluation of a person solely on the basis of appearance…An analysis of culture cannot ignore individual differences in women and girls. Some women blossom under the most hostile conditions while other women wither after the smallest storms. And yet we are more alike than different in the issues that face us. The important question is, under what conditions do most young women flower and grow? Girls are having more trouble now than even ten years ago. Something new is happening. Adolescence has always been hard, but it's harder now because of cultural changes in the last decade. Because of the media, girls all live in one big town - a sleazy, dangerous tinsel town…Increasingly sexualised and objectified, their bodies marketed to sell tractors to toothpaste. Parents, teachers, counselors, and nurses see that girls are in trouble, but they do not realize how universal and extreme the suffering is" (p. 27).

Here we are, 20 years later, and what can we say has happened? Have large, positive cultural changes been made to support girls' growth and development? Have girls been heard? The results of the present content analysis indicate that, where the media is concerned, the opposite has occurred. Not only have things not improved, they have gotten worse: younger girls are being targeted, sexualisation is becoming increasingly exploitive and degrading, and it is becoming more prevalent. The results of the focus group study indicate that Dr. Pipher, 20 years ago, was right to be concerned. They also support the conclusion of the American

Psychological Association's (2007) taskforce. Adolescent girls who participated in the present focus group research voiced that many of them are hurting from being targeted in a sexualised manner and that, for many of them, this media has had negative consequences. The time is now to listen to these girls and to act. It is time for change on many levels to support girls' growth and development. This includes policy changes and attitude changes. Perhaps what is most needed is change on the part of adults everywhere to refuse to accept that this is just the way it is: That sex sells, that girls and women will be exploited in the media, and that we should accept this is inevitable. We can create a better media climate, one that is that is respectful of human rights and that promotes healthy development and self-esteem in all people, including girls. It is time for us, as adults and as a society, to become informed citizens who care about the media and cultural issues affecting girls, who are doing our part to ensure we are providing "the conditions necessary for most girls to flower and grow."

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Appendix A

Conceptualizing Sexualization

Component 1:

A person's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behaviour, to the exclusion of other characteristics

Example: Sexuality is valued over other more relevant characteristics: A soccer team of adolescent girls whose sex appeal is emphasized by their coach or a local journalist in order to attract fans (note, this example could also pertain to Component 3; i.e., the girls are also being sexually objectified)

Component 2:

A person is held to standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy

Example: A specific and nearly unattainable physical appearance constitutes sexiness for women and girls in our society: Instructions given in teen magazines to girls on how to get a boyfriend by losing 10 pounds and straightening their hair (note: this example could also pertain to Component 1)

Component 3:

A person is sexually objectified, that is, made into a thing for others' sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making

Example: Print advertisements that portray women as little girls, with pigtails or ruffles, in sexual poses (note, this example could also pertain to Component 4, the distinction between adults and children is blurred, sexualizing girlhood).

Component 4:

Sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person (e.g., a child)

Example: Adult sexuality is imbued upon a child: A 5-year-old girl wearing a T-shirt that reads "Flirt"

Note: Based on American Psychological Association (2007) Taskforce on the Sexualisation of Girls

Appendix B

Sexualisation Codes

Any Sexualisation

-Tight/fitted clothing showing off her body

-Short skirts

-Short shorts

-Bare midriff/stomach showing

-High heels

-Cleavage emphasized (e.g., jacket zipped down to breasts, no shirt on underneath)

-Buttocks emphasized (e.g., pushing out)

-Highly stylized hair/dyed hair

-Heavy make-up

-Sexualized posture (e.g., sitting with legs spread eagle; pushing out breasts, camera shot focusing on buttocks; “sexy” eyes)

-Body language intended to come across as enticing, arousing, sexually suggestive (e.g., pursing lips, licking lips, hand on bottom)

-Sexualized writing/images on clothing (e.g., the words: hot, sexy, look at me, flirt, handprints on bottom of sweat pants)

-Paired with words or symbols in the ad or video that are sexualized (e.g., sexy, hot, eye-catching)

-Low cut tops (emphasizing breasts/cleavage)

-Camera angle focusing on only one aspect of her body, as opposed to her person as a whole (e.g., zooming in on one aspect (breasts; legs; i.e., objectification)

-Sexy Halloween costumes (e.g., French maid)

-Sexy material (e.g., leather)

Strong Sexualisation

-Naked or intended to imply nudity (or wearing very little clothing, such as a teenage girls wearing pants but no shirt, covering her breasts with her hands);

-In underwear and/or bra only

-See-through clothing

-Thong underwear

-Clear indication of sexual intercourse (e.g., simulation of oral sex, teenagers under covers insinuating they are having sex)

-Physical violence (e.g., girl in tight dress shown with boyfriend who appears to be grabbing her; any form of grabbing, slapping, pinching, hitting, holding against will)

-Emotional violence (e.g., girl in a tight dress being yelled at by a boy; being putdown or name-called)

-Sexual harassment (e.g., catcalls, ogling, words such as bimbo, blondie, toots, chick)

-Sexual violence (any indication of sexual activity not consented to by the female (e.g., buttocks being pinched, sexual activity in which it appears the girl is being held down or in which her facial expression indicates pain, discomfort or lack of enjoyment)

-Degrading or offensive images (e.g., sexualized female eating dog food, covered in dirt, licking ground with tongue to clean it)

-Images that look like prostitution/sex –trade (e.g., wearing fishnets, chains, bondage, standing on a street corner; children selling pole dancing kit)

Infantilization of Women

-Little girl/baby clothes like “onesies”

-Pigtails

-Little girl barrettes/hair bobbles/bows

-Lollipops, candy, bubble gum

-Teddy bear, dolls, or other toys

-School girl outfit (e.g., school uniform, knee high socks)

-Soother

-Portrayed in a childish or naïve way with body language (e.g., sucking on thumb, sucking on fingers, playing with hair, crawling)

-Portrayed with cartoons (like Mickey Mouse or other Disney characters) or similar images intended for children

-Portrayed in a way in which others are treating the woman like a child (e.g., pushing her in a stroller, a wagon, on a swing, on a play structure)

Appendix C

Pre-Focus Group Questionnaire

Instructions: Please answer the following questions using this scale:

1 = strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = agree somewhat, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree

1. Do you describe these media females as attractive?

1 2 3 4 5

2. Do you describe these media females are sexy?

1 2 3 4 5

3. Do you think these images are considered a cultural ideal for women and girls?

1 2 3 4 5

4. Does this media influence your peers' behaviour with boys?

1 2 3 4 5

5. Does this media influence your behaviour with boys?

1 2 3 4 5

6. Does this media influence your peers' behaviour with girls?

1 2 3 4 5

7. Does this media influence your behaviour with girls?

1 2 3 4 5

8. Does sexualised media influence your peers to want to change their appearance?

1 2 3 4 5

9. Does this media influence you to change your appearance?

1 2 3 4 5

10. Does this media make your peers feel negative about themselves?

1 2 3 4 5

11. Does this media make your peers feel positive about themselves?

1 2 3 4 5

12. Does this media make you to feel negatively about yourself?

1 2 3 4 5

13. Does this media make you feel positive about yourself?

1 2 3 4 5

Appendix D

Focus Group Questions

1. Do you (and/or your friends, peers) read magazines like this/see ads like this? Do you watch videos like these? How often?

2. How would you describe these female images?

3. How do these images make you (and/or your friends, peers) feel? To what extent do you think viewing these media images makes you (and/or your friends/peers) feel positive about yourself/themselves? To what extent do you think viewing these images makes you/them feel negative about yourself/themselves? Why or why not? How so?

4. To what extent do female media images like this influence you (and/or your peers, friends) to try to change your/their physical appearance? In what ways? How? Why or why not?

5. Do you (and/or your peers/friends) imitate these female media images? Why or why not? How/in what ways?

6. To what extent/in what ways does media images like this influence you (and/or your friends, peers) behaviour with boys? In what ways? Why or why not?

7. To what extent/in what ways does media images like this influence you (and/or your peers/friends) behaviour with girls? Why or why not? In what ways?

Appendix E

Post-Focus Group Questionnaire

Please answer the follow questions. Do not put your name anywhere on the questionnaire.

1. What is your ethnic background (e.g., Caucasian)?

2. Did you enjoy participating in the focus group today? Explain/describe.

3. Did you learn anything new today? Explain/describe.

4. Did you think today's group was valuable? Explain/describe?

5. Did you feel that you could say anything at all during the group?

6. Did you ever feel that you should not say something because it might be ridiculed/not accepted by the other girls?

7. Did you ever feel that you could not say something because it might be ridiculed or not accepted by the facilitator? Explain/describe.

8. Did you feel pressured by the facilitator to respond in any way? Explain/describe.

9. Is there anything else about the media images you would like to the researcher/group facilitator know?

10. Is there anything else about today's discussion you would like to share with the group facilitator/researcher?