



FAST FACTS & FIGURES

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Early Sexualization

Girls who watch explicit television are more likely to experience early pregnancy. Those in the top 10% in watching explicit programming are twice as likely to get pregnant as those in the bottom 10%.¹

22% of all teen girls say they have electronically sent or posted nude or semi-nude images of themselves, about a third to someone they want to date or hook up with.²

Boys who believe in traditional masculine stereotypes of by toughness, aggression and romantic prowess are more likely to have early sex, more unsafe sex, more sexual partners, and to be involved in unplanned pregnancy.³

Girls who believe in traditional feminine stereotypes of beauty, vulnerability, compliance and motherhood are more like to have early sex, unsafe sex, and unplanned pregnancy. They are also more likely to avoid asking boyfriends to use condoms and more likely to defer to boys' prerogatives requests when it comes to sex.⁴

Latina girls who buy into *machista* codes of femininity are less likely to initiate talk about safe-sex, practice safer-sex and contraception or carry condoms, and more likely to defer to male prerogatives in matters of sex, tolerate infidelity, get pregnant early and become HIV positive.⁵

Masculinity, Bullying & Violence

Emphasis on masculine prowess starts early. For instance, onesies available for infant boys include "Now Accepting Hot Girlfriends," "Chick Magnet," and "Pimp Squad" One o the popular Halloween costumes for young boys last year was "Mack Daddy" – a pimp costume with fur-lined coat and hat, cane and handfuls of play cash to pay working girls.

Masculinity pressures starts young: By 5 or 6, boys who are sad or afraid are already being instructed to "tough it out" or "suck it up" and "act like a man." Repressing unhappy feelings has been tied to problems like Attention Deficit Disorder, conduct disorders, and depression as well as alcohol and drug abuse when they're older.^{6 7}

Boys who don't fit masculine stereotypes consistently report being more victimization and bullying, more loneliness, fewer male friends, and greater unhappiness. And boys begin punishing and bullying those who don't fit such stereotypes as early as age 3-5.⁸

Children and adolescents who play violent video games are more likely to get into fights, be aggressive and be identified by teachers as conduct problems up to a half a year after playing - even when previous aggression is factored out and even in Japan, where public aggression is infrequent and video game use is high.⁹

Almost half (47%) of 6th graders in a UCLA study reports being the targets of bullying during the school week, including name-calling, shoving, kicking, and verbal harassment. 10

66% of students in another study reported seeing peers bullied. Children who witness bullying when nothing is done about it often end up nearly as traumatized and scared of being bullied as the actual victim.11

Toy guns are now so realistic that many manufacturers paint an orange stripe on the end of the barrel. The idea is to reduce the number of kids shot by police who believe they are brandishing real weapons. Since the most popular toy guns are often the powerful ones favored by drug dealers – machine guns, military assault rifles, etc... –criminals have begun painting their guns orange so police will mistake them for toys.12 13

The 1964 G.I. Joe figure would stand 5'10" if he were life-size, and have a 32" waist, a 44" chest and 12" biceps14 – pretty hefty and muscular, but still within normal ranges. The new G.I. Joe Extreme would have a 55" chest, 29" waist and 27" biceps.15

Children and young teens with only minimal exposure to violent entertainment in the media are far less likely to engage in aggressive behavior; about 1 in 7 children age 10-14 routinely watch violent and aggressive programming or movies. 16

Homophobic slurs are often a means for boys to display masculinity: 85% of gay students report being harassed and 44% assaulted at school in the last year.17 And being the target of homophobic ridicule has been strongly linked to anxiety and depression for *all* students, gay or not.18

Girls who identify with traditionally feminine traits are more likely to admit to using social aggression like gossiping and exclusion against other girls.19

When playing video games, girls who believe they are not being observed show as much and in some cases significantly more aggression than boys.20

Body Image & Eating Disorders

The American Psychological Association has tied early sexualization and over-sexualization of young girls to their three most common mental health complaints: eating disorders, body image problems, and depression.21

Sexualization of young girls starts early with national chains like Baby Gap are selling infant "onesies" with slogans like "Bikini Patrol" and "Snow Bunny;" and popular t-shirts available elsewhere for toddlers including "So Many Boys, So Little Time," "Scratch and Sniff."

Both Barbie and Bratz dolls are so thin, they lack the internal proportions to have bodily organs like kidneys or large intestines; both would lack the 17-22% of body fat necessary for females to menstruate. 22

The new Bratz dolls would be unable to stand up as well, because their outsized heads and skulls would weigh almost 100 pounds, while their 12" waists would be unable to support their size 40GG busts. 23

If Barbie were a real woman, she would be 7'2", weigh 101 pounds, and have a 19" waist and 39FF chest. A real woman with these proportions would be unable to support her upper body and stand up straight. 24

More than 83% of the most popular TV shows for teens – often watched by younger girls as well -- include sexual content 25.

Sales of thongs to tweens have quadrupled since 2000.26

22% of all teen girls say they have electronically sent or posted nude or semi-nude images of themselves, about a third to someone they want to date or hook up with. 27

Female characters in children's cartoon shows are five times more likely to be shown in revealing, skimpy clothing (even when they are animals) and three times more likely to be shown with physically-impossible tiny waists. 28

69% of middle and high school girls say that pictures in publications like *Seventeen*, *Jet*, *Sassy*, and *Glamour* influence their idea of the ideal body, and almost half of them report being dissatisfied with their weight.29

67% of third-grade girls are "very scared" of being fat;30 81% of 10 year-olds report being concerned about being fat. 31

Between 30 and 50% of adolescent girls are concerned about their weight or already dieting.32

Eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia used to start in the "tweens" – doctors are now treating them in girls as young as five or six. 33

Body image issues and dieting are now so prevalent among adolescent and pre-adolescent girls that researchers have dubbed it a "normative discontent" -- the norm for girls, rather than the exception.34

40% of newly identified cases of anorexia are in girls 15-19 years old, and rate of bulimia in recent years among young women has tripled. 35

Boys are more body-conscious and worried about being muscular and thin than at any time in the last 10 years.36 Men now account for 25 of adults with anorexia or bulimia and 40 percent of binge eaters.37

Almost two-thirds of elementary school girls say they are "happy the way I am." But this feeling of self-esteem drops over the next five years by more than half and by high school only 29% are happy with the way they are.38

Three-quarters of female characters in TV situation comedies are underweight; only 1 in 20 is average size. Moreover, female characters that are heavier tend to get made fun of more often, and 80% of the time these negative comments are rewarded with audience laughter.39

20 years ago the average model weighed only 8% less than the average woman; today the average model is almost 25% underweight 40 and weighs less than 98% of American women.

Academic Underachievement

44% of girls and 38% of boys say that, “the smartest girls in my school are not popular.”⁴²

Until the age of 9, African-American boys do just as well as their peers academically; around 3rd grade, when being seen as masculine and macho becomes important, stop-out rates and truancy begin to climb while grades and test scores begin to fall.

Girls in the US are not expected to do well in math, and by and large they don't; in Japan, where math excellence is expected and encouraged of all students, girls do as well or better than boys.⁴³

Media: the New ‘Super-Parent’

Children and adolescents are exposed to media content 8.5 hours a day, including an average of 40,000 commercial messages annually, or about 100 per day from all sources – providing marketers an unprecedented level of direct access. ⁴⁴

By the time they graduate high school, children will have spent more time watching TV than in the classroom or talking with their parents. ⁴⁵

Media messages have become so powerful and pervasive that mass media is acting as a “super-peer, dictating what is cool or expected, particularly in matters of adolescent sex. ” ⁴⁶

Although men are the main characters in most commercials, only 2% show men cooking, caring for children or doing other domestic chores,. Men are most often in business settings, with women doing house-hold tasks and/or selling household products. ⁴⁷

Boys in children's commercials spend half their time spent building, fixing things, and fighting. Girls spend three-quarters of their time talking, laughing, and observing others. Boys are almost always (85%) shown outside, while girls are shown in the home about half the time. ⁴⁸

75% of the characters in the top 100 G-rated family movies from 1990-2004 were male. ⁴⁹

Children see about 123 characters each Saturday morning. Few are female – only 15% in cartoon shows. Of the few that are female, almost all will be highly stereotyped and almost none will be positive role models.^{50 51}

Female cartoon characters are more romantic, frail, and concerned about their appearance. They are more likely to show helplessness and ask for protection, to ask for advice, to act as caregivers, and to be romantic. ⁵²

Male lead characters talk twice as much as female characters, and they are more likely to show bravery, ingenuity, leadership and achievement.⁵³

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