Twitter Thread by Abhinav Agarwal



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Thread on the sexualization of children in society and the role the media, movies, and toys play.

These excerpts are from "So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood, and What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Kids", by Jean Kilbourne & Diane E.

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"A four-year-old girl, in the dramatic play area of her preschool, begins swaying her hips and singing, “Baby, I’m your slave. I’ll let you whip me if I misbehave.”"

#sexualization #society

3/
"When her teacher goes over to talk to her about it, she volunteers that she learned the song from her eight-year-old sister. After doing a bit of research, the teacher discovers that the words are from a highly popular Justin Timberlake song."

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"A six-year-old casually asks at dinner, “What’s a blow job?” Before his parents can respond, his ten-year-old sister knowingly screeches, “Oh my God, I can’t believe he asked that!”"

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"Both boys and girls are routinely exposed to images of sexual behavior devoid of emotions, attachment, or consequences. They learn that sex is the defining activity in relationships, to the exclusion of love and friendship. They learn that sex is often linked to violence."

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"And they learn to associate physical appearance and buying the right products not only with being sexy but also with being successful as a person."

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"Such lessons will shape their gender identity, sexual attitudes, and values, and their capacity for relationships, for love and connection, that they take into adulthood."

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"The fourth-grade girl... has learned to talk about herself as if she were an object, judged solely by her looks. She has learned to be grown up beyond her years and to yearn for a romantic relationship with a boy."

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"He, as many boys his age do, has to figure out how to deal with the sexy and provocative behavior of many of the girls in his life. The boy in the story above was fortunate to have a trusting relationship with his mother, so he could talk with her about his confusion."

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"Both girls and boys, but especially girls, are pushed into precocious sexuality in appearance and behavior long before they understand the deeper meaning of relationships or of the sexual behavior they're imitating."

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"According to the Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls (2007), #sexualization has to do with treating other people (and sometimes one-self) as "objects of sexual desire . . . as things rather than as people with legitimate sexual feelings of their own.""

12/
"When people are sexualized, their value comes primarily from their sex appeal, which is equated with physical attractiveness."

13/
"In the most extreme cases, the media's incessant sexualization of childhood can contribute to pathological sexual behavior, including sexual abuse, pedophilia, and prostitution."
#media
#sexualization
#society

14/
"But 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. The problem is not that sex as portrayed in the media is sinful, but that it is synthetic and cynical."

15/
"The exploitation of our children's sexuality is in many ways designed to promote consumerism, not just in childhood but throughout their lives."

16/
"Too often you, the parents, are told that the problem of sexualized childhood is your fault: If you were doing your job right and could just learn to say no, then there wouldn't be a problem. Casting blame..."

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"...on parents is a smoke screen that diverts attention from where the blame rightfully belongs—squarely on the shoulders of the purveyors of these media and marketing messages, those who exploit our children's developmental vulnerabilities by using sex to make huge profits."

18/
"Bratz dolls—by their name, their anorexic-looking bodies, their overt sexuality and hookerlike wardrobe, as well as by the focus on shopping and appearance as the point of the play."

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"Meghan recounted with obvious distress that her seven-year-old daughter, Eva, had come home from school the day before and asked, "Mom, what's a blow job?""

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"Meghan's first impulse was to tell Eva that it wasn't something for children, it was for adults, and to terminate the conversation then and there."

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"But... she asked, "Where did you hear about blow jobs?" Eva replied that she heard about it at school. Meghan followed with, "What did you hear about it?" Eva responded, "It's sex." Meghan couldn't imagine where to go next with the conversation."

21/
"Tessa's mother, Kate, quietly went into the hallway to see how they were doing. Through the bedroom door, left slightly ajar, she overheard a conversation that took her breath away."

22/
"The girls were talking about what Cassie, a girl in their class who was not at the party, had worn to school that day—a midriff shirt that exposed her belly button. Kendra said, "My mom says I can't have one. I keep telling her it's not fair.""

23/
"As Kate continued to eavesdrop, she learned that "the boys like Cassie." They chase her on the playground, and one of the boys actually ran up to her and kissed her! Kate also learned that the boy is Cassie's "boyfriend" now, and he likes her because she's "sexy.""

24/
"marketers know that using sex and sexiness is an extremely effective way to sell products to children starting at a young age.

...

More than 80 percent of popular teen TV shows contain sexual content."

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"When a 1978 FTC report concluded that children under age seven do not possess the cognitive ability to evaluate

child-oriented television advertising (a conclusion that the APA reiterated in 2004), Congress began to consider legislation to give the FTC more regulatory power"

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"...over advertising to children. But the tide began to turn on the possibility of the FTC's playing a regulatory role when the entertainment and marketing industries launched a powerful lobbying effort in Congress against the new effort."

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"This successful campaign not only stopped Congress from passing the new legislation, it also stripped the FTC of the limited powers it already had to oversee children's advertising."

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"Until the mid-1980s, children's television was regulated by the Federal Communications Commission. The regulations placed limitations on marketers' access to children by specifying the number of advertising minutes allowed per hour during children's programming."

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"But the floodgates truly opened with the FCC's deregulation of children's television during the Reagan administration in the mid-1980s, when pressure mounted to get government to deregulate all aspects of industry."

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"Deregulation made it possible for marketers to develop products for children directly linked to children's television programs. And the program-length commercial, a program made for the sole purpose of selling products, was born."

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"More specifically, programs were now used to market toys to children that replicated everything they saw on the program. The first blockbuster show after deregulation was Masters of the Universe (He-Man),"

32/
"Two monumental things happened after deregulation of children's television that point the way to where we are today. First, children became a separate marketing group, with corporations treating children as consumers for the very first time."

33/
"Second, and more alarmingly in terms of exposing kids to concepts beyond their ability to understand, sex and violence became primary marketing tools to capture children's attention and create voracious consumers."

34/
"sexiness and mean-spirited behavior crept into shows like Powerpuff Girls
And violence became the defining feature of programming for boys, with such highly successful shows as Masters of the Universe, Transformers, GI Joe, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles"

35/
"when Mattel, Barbie's manufacturer, realized that play with Barbie dolls (and other dolls too) was ending at younger ages than in the past (a phenomenon known as "age compression" by the industry), it responded by introducing the Lingerie

Barbie line for older girls"

36/
"it (Mattel) responded by introducing the Lingerie Barbie line for older girls—dolls wearing see-through lingerie. Brazenly, the Barbie .com website describes one new doll in the Lingerie series this way:"

37/
"• “So Many Boys, So Little Time” is the slogan on one fitted T-shirt sold in a size made for six-year-old girls.
• A T-shirt for four-year-old girls says “Scratch and Sniff” across the chest.""

38/
"A recent development to sexualize girls even further is the all-in-one fashion boutiques for girls like Club Libby Lu, a chain of stores owned by Saks Fifth Avenue and rapidly appearing at shopping malls across the country."

39/
"Here young girls can have makeover birthday parties that include dressing up like sexy grown-ups with clothes for the part, makeup, and fancy hairstyles."

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"Marketers know about young children’s vulnerabilities, and they exploit them. They work very hard to create a strong childhood culture that divides children from adults."

41/
"They (marketers) deliberately create peer pressure to attract children to products that their parents don’t want them to have, products that are generally not good for them and sometimes can be extremely harmful."

42/
""“Teach seven-year-olds that sexual expression is a matter of accessorizing and you’ve secured a lifetime of purchases in the lingerie department.""
#sexualization
#marketing
#society #children

43/
""“Disassociate sex from non-market feelings (pleasure, desire, intimacy) and associate it instead with consumable superficialities, and you’ll not only keep the rabble in line, you’ll have them lined up at the mall.""

44/
"• Sexual development does not occur in isolation; it is connected to other lessons children are learning at the same time about themselves, others, and how to function in their world."

45/
"• Young children are drawn to information that is visible and concrete, unfamiliar, dramatic, or even scary. This helps explain why they are so easily seduced by violent actions and sexy physical appearance (large breasts, scanty clothing), as

well as actual sexy behavior"

46/
"Big breasts on view, scantily clad bodies, and sexy body movements are not part of the everyday life experiences of most children. That’s why they grab a child’s attention when they do occur."

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"Young children can’t fully distinguish between what is pretend and what is real."

48/
"When they see an advertisement featuring a male ogling a female in sexy clothing, children will probably not consider or understand that both parties are being paid a lot of money to look and act this way."

49/
"Unfortunately, most parents know much less about child psychology than the marketers do."

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"Instead of being encouraged to work on their own internal needs and get satisfaction from what they actually accomplish, children learn to associate happiness and a sense of well-being with getting the material things they want."

51/
"This process of equating acquiring objects with happiness could be considered a child’s first drug."

52/
"In a 2002 survey of parents of five- to seventeen-year-olds, almost half reported that their biggest challenge was trying to protect their children from the negative societal influences in the outside world."

53/
"schools in a wealthy suburban community reports that middle school officials have had to cancel school dances because of sexual activity such as lap and sandwich dancing, where a girl dances between two boys who press up against her in front and in back."

54/
"They (schools in a wealthy suburban community) are also having problems at dances these days with “freaking,” a kind of dancing in which a boy and girl grind against each other in a simulation of sexual intercourse."

55/
"The most popular girl in the class had gone down on three of the football players. Lizzie thought it sounded gross, but Rachel said it was cool. Lizzie didn’t think she’d know how to do it and she didn’t want to ask Rachel, but she’d found the answer in Cosmo."

56/
"clothing chain store popular with young people is called f.c.u.k. “You can learn more about anatomy after school,” says an

ad featuring a young couple embracing in a school yard, an ad that manages to trivialize sex, relationships, & education all in one sentence."

57/
"The point is not to arouse desire for the person, but to arouse desire for the product.

Far from being considered shameful or embarrassing, porn has become cool, edgy."

58/
""“The Internet gives teen boys the idea that girls are interchangeable sexual objects at their disposal,” says Lynn Ponton, author of The Sex Lives of Teenagers. “So how can they ever be developmentally ready for a real-life relationship?”"

59/
""“If you believe Sesame Street taught your four-year-old something, then you better believe MTV is teaching your fourteen-year-old something, because the influence doesn’t stop when we come to a certain age.”"

60/
"Another study found that young black girls who frequently watched rap music videos were more likely to binge drink, have sex with multiple partners,"

61/
""“She knows how to hang in bars, flirt, and go home with a hookup. She doesn’t know how to spend time with a person, one on one. That scares her. She feels like a loser, she feels disconnected and empty, and has low self-esteem.”"

62/
"Females have long been categorized as either virgins or whores, of course. What is new is that girls are now supposed to embody both within themselves—& that even very little girls are encouraged to look sexy long before they have any real understanding of what this means."

63/
"One way that some girls deal with the contradiction is to use alcohol, both to lessen their inhibitions and to numb their emotions. It is no coincidence that the hookup culture is a “whirlwind of drunkenness.”"

64/
"A young woman can manage to have sex and yet in some sense maintain her virginity by being “out of control,” drunk, and /or deep in denial about the entire experience. It is not surprising that most teenage pregnancies begin when one or both parties are drunk."

65/
"Alcohol and other mind-altering drugs permit sexual activity at the same time that they allow denial. One is almost literally not there. The next day one has an excuse: I was drunk. I was swept away. I did not choose this experience."

66/
"You may be surprised to hear this, but the model in the popular culture of desirable female sexuality today comes straight

from pornography. Paris Hilton’s sex video makes her famous. Porn stars and call girls write bestsellers."

67/
"From a young age,girls are encouraged to dress & act like hookers and strippers—to remove all or almost all of their pubic hair (via “Brazilian” waxes), to wear G-strings (now called “thongs”), to pole-dance at parties & make out with other girls in order to titillate boys."

68/
"Some make the terrible mistake of believing that being seen as sex objects, dressing up as male fantasies, and having meaningless sexual encounters is empowering and liberating."

69/
"8 students were suspended from a Virginia high school.. —3 boys & 2 girls for engaging in oral sex & intercourse on school property & 3 other boys for watching. schoolmates called the girls “sluts” & “whores,” but criticized the boys only for jeopardizing the football team."

70/
"And yet another study found that girls ages nine to fourteen who said that they wanted to look like television or movie stars were twice as likely to be concerned about their weight, to be constant dieters, and to engage in purging behavior."

71/
"Images of young girls who are made to look like adult women (such as many of the models in the fashion magazines) may evoke similar responses. These images may also contribute to the trafficking and prostitution of girls by helping to create a market for sex with children.."

72/
"“For the first time in human history, most of the stories about people, life, and values are told not by parents, schools, churches, or others in the community who have something to tell, but by a group of distant conglomerates that have something to sell.”"

73/
"Protect children as much as possible from exposure to sexual imagery and related content in the media and popular culture.

To begin with, it’s almost always a bad idea to allow computers and television sets in children’s bedrooms."

74/
"A two-year study of more than twelve thousand adolescents found that the best predictor of health and the strongest deterrent to high-risk behavior in teens was a strong connection with at least one adult, at home or at school."

75/
"“By gazing at these images, adult consumers are forced to engage in cultural pedophilia: that is, to view under-age girls and boys as sexualized objects whether we want to or not.""

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