

## SEXUALIZATION OF CHILDREN IN THE CONTEMPORARY MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

Since the age of consent has been reduced to 18 years a consequence is children and teenagers have taken on adult activities at a much younger age. For example children are drinking earlier, smoking earlier and engaging in adult activities. Being out late at night and attempting or being admitted to nightclubs.

Clothing supplied by manufactures for young girls/teenagers have been mini versions of adult clothing. Very little is available for pre pubescent teenagers which many parents consider suitable for that age group. There is one step from children's to adult's clothing.

One of the consequences of this acting as an adult while underage has also been promoted by the media.

Clothing manufacturers like to dress underage models in publicity shots because they are usually slimmer than adults and can wear size 0 clothing. A side effect of this is that young girls of normal weight then have body image problems.

These models who started working at a young age also are acting as adults and some cannot cope with the demands of being famous and earning large amounts of money and take solace in alcohol/drugs and generally move with the wrong crowd. Kate Moss springs to mind who started modeling around 15 on the world stage and now in her twenties is rich, has a drug problem, has a boyfriend who has been sent to gaol and is in the media continually on the night club scene hardly a role model for young girls.

The recent incident at the Melbourne Fashion Week was the intended use of a 14 year old European model as the star attraction. After public disquiet it was good to see sense prevailed and models now have to be 16, but they are still children.

Magazines are featuring girls in adult roles. One national magazine (Woman's Day) recently had a feature on Tigerlily Hutchence and how she had blossomed from a little girl to lady. Tigerlily is 11 years old. Television also has role to play in not portraying schools girls in adult roles both in content and dress. Popular soapies in particular need to be careful.