The sexualisation and commercialisation of children in Ireland: an exploratory study

The sexualisation and commercialisation of children in Ireland: an exploratory study

Contents

Acknowledgements

About the authors

Dr Elizabeth Kiely is the Primary Investigator for this research project and a senior lecturer in social policy in the School of Applied Social Studies, University College Cork. Her teaching and research interests are in the fields of social policy, youth policy and practice, penal policy, research methods and women's studies. Recent co-edited/co-authored and single-author publications include: 'School-based Sex Education in Ireland, 1996-2002: The Public Debate' in *Sexual Politics in Modern Ireland* (Irish Academic Press, 2015); *Sexualities and Irish Society: A Reader* (Orpen Press, 2014); 'Pre-baby boom women's attitudes and responses to second wave feminism in Ireland', *Women's Studies International Forum* (2014, Vol. 44, pp. 172-83); *Irish Women at Work, 1930-1960: An Oral History* (Irish Academic Press, 2012); *Youth and Community Work in Ireland: Critical Perspectives* (Blackhall, 2009). Dr Kiely is a research associate of the Institute for Social Science in the 21st Century (ISS21), leader of the ISS21 Children and Young People Interdisciplinary Research Cluster and a member of the Social Research Ethics Committee in University College Cork.

Dr Debbie Ging is a lecturer in the School of Communications at Dublin City University (DCU) and Chair of the MA in Film and Television Studies. She teaches and researches on all aspects of gender and sexuality in the media, and is the author of *Men and Masculinities in Irish Cinema* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) and co-editor of *Transforming Ireland: Challenges, critiques, resources* (Manchester University Press, 2009). She is a member of the International Advisory Board for the journal *Men and Masculinities* (http://jmm.sagepub.com/) and a member of the Editorial Board of *Gender, Sexuality and Feminism* (http://www.gsfjournal.org/). She is also a member of the National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre (https://www4.dcu.ie/abc/index.shtml) and of the EROSS research group in DCU (http://www.dcu.ie/eross/index.shtml).

Dr Karl Kitching is a lecturer in the School of Education, University College Cork. He is the author of the recent book *The Politics of Compulsive Education: Racism and Learner-Citizenship* (Routledge, 2014), which addresses the history and current state of racism as a marker of social control and inequality in Irish education and society. He is also the Primary Investigator for the project *Making Communion: Disappearing and Emerging Forms of Childhood in Ireland*, funded by the Irish Research Council. Findings from this study on children's religious belief, belonging and inequalities in Irish society will be released in due course.

Dr Máire Leane is Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, Head of the Graduate School in the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences, and a senior lecturer in social policy in the School of Applied Social Studies, University College Cork. Her research centres on analyses of how policy and legislation impact on people's lives and she has a particular interest in the spheres of sexuality, gender and disability. Recent co-edited/co-authored and single-author publications include: *Sexualities and Irish Society: A Reader* (Orpen Press, 2014); *Irish Women at Work, 1930-1960: An Oral History* (Irish Academic Press, 2012); 'Practising childbirth activism: A politics of evidence', *BioSocieties* (2014, Vol. 9, pp. 129-52); 'Pre-baby boom women's attitudes and responses to second wave feminism in Ireland', *Women's Studies International Forum* (2014, Vol. 44, pp. 172-83); 'Caring for the Celtic Cubs: Discursive constructions of mothers and mothering in the Irish childcare debate', *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* (2008, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 243-55).

Dr Gill Harold is a social geographer whose primary research interests focus on questions of identity, difference, sensory experience, disability, language and citizenship. These were mobilised in her Government of Ireland-funded doctoral thesis in which she explored the hearing-centred values underpinning the social reproduction of urban public spaces. Her current research, exploring access to justice for deaf victims of crime, is funded by a two-year

Irish Research Council postdoctoral fellowship and she is based in the Centre for Criminal Justice and Human Rights within the Faculty of Law at University College Cork. Dr Harold worked as the research assistant on the present research project between December 2012 and September 2013.

Catriona Keane is a PhD student in the School of Applied Social Studies and Women's Studies in University College Cork. She has a background in social science and women's studies, and completed both her undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the same university. She recently carried out a research project funded by the US Embassy on youth unemployment. She contributed to some of the data analysis for the present research, as well as editing and proofreading earlier drafts of some chapters of this report.

Executive summary

This study on the sexualisation and commercialisation of children in Ireland was commissioned under the Irish Research Council's Research Development Initiative, in conjunction with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The study was exploratory and its specific objectives were to:

> comprehensively review the literature on the sexualisation and commercialisation of children;
> uncover and critically analyse the various concepts of 'childhood' evident in the academic, policy and popular discourses generated by this issue;
> ascertain the views and experiences of parents, as well as a small number of young adults and other stakeholders;
> review and analyse Irish and other national regulatory frameworks and initiatives to address the 'problems' of the sexualisation and commercialisation of children, and in so doing, to draw conclusions and make recommendations for Irish policy and practice.

Methodology

The methods employed to achieve the above objectives were:

> Primary research, conducted during the period May 2013 to January 2014, involved nine focus groups with parents/guardians and interviews with 28 parents (26 interviewed individually and two mothers interviewed together) and five couples who were parents. In total, the views of 78 parents/guardians were accessed for the study.
> Secondary research involved:
>> (a) reviewing existing academic scholarship and policy reports from other countries on or closely related to the main focus of this study;
>> (b) conducting a desk-based review of the regulatory and educational landscapes in Ireland and other selected countries;
>> (c) compiling a list of formal complaints made to key regulatory bodies on issues deemed relevant to the protection of children and the reported outcomes of these complaints;
>> (d) examining the ways in which commercialisation and sexualisation of children are framed in different kinds of popular discourses in the Irish context.
> These data were supplemented by a small amount of qualitative data gathered from:
>> (a) 12 young adults (aged 18-22) who responded to a call for focus group participants and interviewees in three third-level educational settings;
>> (b) four stakeholders selected on the basis that they have contributed to the public/media discourse on commercialisation and sexualisation of children in the Irish context.

Key findings

Meanings of commercialisation and sexualisation

> When 'sexualisation' and 'commercialisation' of children are discussed, different and sometimes competing concepts of these phenomena and of children are produced.
> Parents viewed commercialisation as a pervasive feature of advanced capitalist societies. Aspects of the commercial world, when related to children, at times concerned parents, but these aspects varied depending on the parents' own views and experiences relating to advertising, the desirability of commercialism, advances in technologies, their own experiences as children, and their values/aspirations for their children, as well as the age, gender and perceived personalities of their children.
> The literature and primary research material support the contention that the commercialisation and sexualisation of children are not new phenomena. Points of consensus in focus group discussions and interviews with parents were that children live in a more commercial and sex-saturated societal culture in recent years, and that a

greater number of spaces and places that children inhabit are influenced by commercial values and practices.

› The idea of children as a market in their own right has a long history, but the literature reviewed and findings from the focus groups and interviews directed attention at important shifts in intensity in the children's market. Key characteristics include the increased operation of marketing across borders; the different definitions of what constitutes 'a child' informing market regulation in operation in different contexts (i.e. age); the emergence of digital technologies presenting more opportunities for marketers to reach children in different and novel ways; and the provision of more spaces and places, together with branded tailored goods and services for children and families to consume.

› Because the concepts of sexualisation and commercialisation are more negatively (rather than positively) employed, they tend most often in the literature and in primary data to be constructed as 'problems' impacting on children which need to be addressed. That these phenomena do have positive and life-enhancing impacts on children's lives does receive attention, but much less so than the negative aspects. Examples of positive aspects could include the opportunity for identity construction or identity play; access to fun and pleasure made available by market provision/products; or the opportunity for social learning, such as how marketing works.

Constructions of children

› Perceptions of children as sexually innocent or as victims are commonplace and those children or young people perceived to lack the innocence of childhood are conceptualised as both risky and at risk in popular discourses and in the data gathered from parents in this study.

› The evidence gathered indicates that sexualisation as deployed in popular discourse and in focus group/interview data is strongly gendered, so that 'sexualised' or 'knowing' girls are perceived as a problem, both for themselves and for others. Easier access to sexually explicit material and pornography – be it accidental, deliberate or habitual – is how 'sexualisation' is mainly viewed as impacting on boys, with associated implications for girls' lives, relational experiences and well-being.

› Girls' sexualised dress, demeanour and practices were strongly perceived by parents to put them at risk of unwanted sexual attention or possibly assault, indicating a relatively pervasive and concerning construction of the 'problem' of sexual assault as one of girls' inappropriate clothing or way of being.

Parents' views and strategies

› When parents discussed their children's engagements in the commercial world, they at times referred to their own consumption values as parents or to those of the wider family, revealing interesting insights into how these can be considerably influential, interconnected, highly ambivalent and contradictory.

› Parents articulated more concerns about sexualisation than about commercialisation, where their children were concerned. But it is important to note that many of these concerns were rooted in assumptions of children's social and sexual worlds, often influenced by media reports, popular sexualisation discourses in circulation, anecdotal evidence or social trends they found concerning, and to a much lesser extent in actual negative experiences with their own children. In this context, children's access to, and use of, the Internet featured most prominently in parents' concerns about the risks posed to children by different dimensions of commercialisation and sexualisation.

› In seeking to protect their children from what they considered harmful sexual or commercial influences, the data from parents indicate that they sometimes struggled in relation to knowing how best to do this. For example, on the one hand, they considered that the avoidance of conversation or explanation potentially maintained children's innocence, while on the other hand, they thought that the provision of information and

skills, which potentially compromised innocence, offered children opportunities for learning, understanding, self-protection and the development of resilience.

› Parents interviewed were predominantly very resourceful in addressing concerns about sexualisation or commercialisation with their children, in ways that took account of their children's ages, personality types, sensitivities, friendships and likely reactions.

› Parents have different values, levels of resources and experience different kinds of challenges where issues pertaining to sexualisation and commercialisation of their children are concerned, and for this reason they also hold diverse views as to what needs to be addressed and in what ways.

› As family relations tend to be more democratic and less authoritarian in contemporary Irish society, blanket rules set by parents are fewer, particularly for older children, and more discussion, negotiation and compromise take place between parents and their children around contentious issues. This was evident in parents' accounts of shopping for food with younger children and shopping for clothes with older children.

› Parents identified informal 'teachable' moments when they sought to impart lessons and skills about the commercial or sexual worlds to young children and teenagers, in order to help them develop resilience, and to better navigate their worlds safely and successfully.

› Older siblings were frequently encouraged and expected by parents to monitor younger children's activities, to guide them, to set norms of behaviour and to support them to navigate successfully their commercial and sexual worlds.

› Some parents were concerned about risks posed by children's online activities in terms of them unwittingly breaking the law, or in terms of jeopardising their future education and employment prospects. Interviews with two stakeholders suggested that these were justifiable concerns and particularly in relation to children identified as 'vulnerable'.

Education

› Parents interviewed put forward ideas for extending regulation, but they favoured education as the main approach to addressing concerns arising from commercialisation and sexualisation. They perceived school as playing a very important, but not exclusive, role in this regard.

Regulation

› The logic and character of regulation and policy activity are very much informed by a country's own specific historical, social and cultural characteristics, as well as by dominant constructions of childhood.

› Parents reported that they rarely made complaints, either informally or formally, in relation to aspects of commercialisation and sexualisation which they thought to be problematic for children. This was for a range of different reasons. The finding was supported by a review of formal complaints to key authorities conducted during this study.

› Parents demonstrated little awareness and information on the regulatory infrastructure in Ireland or the codes of practice adopted by the regulatory bodies. They also had relatively little knowledge about what agencies to contact about any specific concerns.

› Parents predominantly regarded themselves as being responsible for their children in relation to protecting them and guiding them in a commercialised and sexualised society. However, most favoured a strong stakeholder approach to support their efforts in this regard (involving, for example, actions by school authorities, regulatory bodies, marketers and retailers).

Conclusions

The study reached four overall conclusions, as follows:

1. The commercialisation and sexualisation of children are complicated issues, not easily understood or addressed. They are not perceived in the literature or by parents in this study to be entirely new phenomena; rather, they are perceived to have intensified in different and new ways in contemporary culture in recent years.

2. Children, and more particularly girls, in much of the public discourse analysed for the study were constructed as simply buying into what is expected of them in a commercialised and sexualised landscape, and any evidence to the contrary tends to be given much less attention.

3. The negotiations and interactions that occur between parents and children on issues, as reported by parents, are complicated and often informed by a range of different factors as they relate to real-life familial and relational contexts.

4. Parents accept the bulk of the responsibility to act on issues of concern when they arise, but also identify how they can be supported by other individuals and agencies, most notably family members, the State and school authorities. Parents also identified barriers and challenges they confronted in taking such action when required.

Recommendations

Regulation

> The introduction of a regulatory one-stop portal like 'Parentport' in the UK could be assessed in terms of its effectiveness and suitability for simplifying the regulatory infrastructure in Ireland, for making it more complaints-friendly for parents and other stakeholders, and for providing resources for use in different educational settings.

> All regulatory authorities should be expected to make their websites and resources more parent-friendly and child-friendly, and they should be required to use part of their resources to engage in regular public awareness activities directed at parents, children and other stakeholders.

> The findings indicate support for a range of measures to be taken by all authorities, with a regulatory function to ensure that the regulatory infrastructure stays fit for purpose in a rapidly changing global media and commercial environment, and one in which self-regulation increasingly predominates.

> There is an increasing need for key stakeholders to think about, discuss and debate the extent to which public services, such as education, health and care, could or should be insulated from commercialisation in the best interests of children. The results of these deliberations could usefully inform regulatory policies, codes of practice and guidelines for public provision aimed at children.

> Some of the literature provides support for the recommendation that the pursuit of new or more extensive regulation (e.g. advertising restrictions) in any particular sphere needs to be informed by a rigorous cost-benefit analysis, with reasonable certainty as to its effective implementation and enforcement, as well as sufficient evidence that advertising and marketing are playing a more important part in causing harm than other factors in children's lives.

Challenging limitations in the discourse of sexualisation

> In view of how sexualisation is frequently framed in very particular ways in public discourse, there is an onus on those contributing to it to shift it from being an issue solely about child protection towards one about the protection of girls and women in our society. This would enrich public discourse on how we can address important social issues pertaining to gender inequalities, sexist culture and the impact of gender-based double standards, as well as narrow gender typing in Irish society.

> There is a need to consider the implications of a discourse of sexualisation that makes girls responsible for their own safety. It obfuscates a discourse promoting a better understanding of, and acceptance of, the importance of sexual consent. It contributes to victim-blaming for sexual violence in our society.

> There is also a need to consider if and how a more intensively sexualised culture and ease of access to sexually explicit material and pornography interacts with understandings of sexual relations/sexual practices held by boys and young men, in what particular ways and with what implications.

Education

> Media and/or consumer education in different forms and for different constituencies or groups provides an important accompaniment to regulation in other countries examined in the study. In some countries, such education is introduced from the earliest age. Currently, this kind of educational provision is relatively underdeveloped in Ireland.

> At the time of writing, the Stay Safe Programme was under review, but the findings point to the usefulness of its remit, including positive, safe and effective use of digital technologies for children, thus ensuring that online risk, safety and rights are configured as part of the broader child protection/welfare/rights agenda in Irish society.

> The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner should continue to be resourced to publicise and develop resources for lessons on data protection in school curricula.

> While the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Programme may have developed out of a perceived problem about children and young people's sexualities, a reframing of this programme in line with children's rights and respect for their sexual citizenship is now required, in order to promote its potential as an effective educational strategy.

> The findings on the discourse of sexualisation in Ireland indicate the need for children and young people to have space and opportunity in the RSE Programme to critically analyse dominant and oppressive constructions of masculinities and femininities, and their own relationships with these constructions, as well as to explore connections between sexism and misogyny in popular culture and sexual violence in wider society. The cross-curricular approach to RSE, if implemented, could ideally support learning about sexualities and relationships as socially constructed and in ways that are framed around struggles for recognition and rights, justice and equalities.

> There is a need for material to be included in the RSE Programme that provides realistic relational scenarios, or that starts where young people 'are at,' in order to provoke young people to think critically and to develop their ethics of care and empathy with each other in real-life relational contexts and in the sphere of their digital sexual communications.

> The development of a strong framework for ethical digital citizenship education for children entering their teenage years could potentially be of benefit. This could usefully be underpinned by a strong focus on children's rights as they relate to the Internet, and future research and policy developments in the field of children's rights online.

> Internet safety and digital literacy skills should be part of the core curriculum at both primary and post-primary levels.

> Schools, youth services and other agencies should be encouraged and supported to address sexism, gendered or sexual harassment within young people's sexual cultures through education or sanctions, as appropriate.

Supporting parents

> Proven rating/classification systems that can be used to good effect by parents to inform their decision-making should be strongly and frequently publicised.

> In this context, the age requirements for social networking sites should also be publicised.

> Parents also welcome concise and up-to-date information on new Internet or social networking sites to inform their decision-making as parents.

Further research

› The lack of data on children and young people's gender, sexual and commercial cultures, and the key factors/influences informing them, needs to be addressed in the Irish context. The views and experiences of children and young people, who are diverse in the context of their socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. social class, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation), should also inform any future research conducted in this field.

Benefits of the study

The benefits of this study arise from the following key features. It is the first study of its kind in Ireland to explore the views and experiences of parents on issues pertaining to the sexualisation and commercialisation of children in Irish society. While it is exploratory, it provides significant insights from parents' perspectives into parent-child interactions and negotiations on issues pertaining to sexualisation and commercialisation in complicated, real-life relational contexts. It charts key regulatory and educational developments in the context of other countries as informed by policy reviews designed to respond to public concerns. It uses primary data to explain the low level of official complaints made by parents on issues of concern to them. It highlights how sexualisation has been framed in problematic ways in public discourses and it considers the possible implications. Finally, it provides an important starting point for the further development of discussion, policy and practice in this field in the Irish context

Challenges and limitations of the study

The challenges and limitations of this study arise from the following factors:

› What is meant by 'sexualisation' and 'commercialisation' is not clear, since these concepts are relatively elastic, ill-defined and used in ways that are contested and problematic. This has presented particular challenges for a research project concerned with exploring such phenomena in the Irish context.

› In other countries, there are ongoing and polarised debates informed by different ideological perspectives and disciplinary concerns, as well as contradictory evidence about many of the issues on the sexualisation and commercialisation of children and how they should be addressed. Such a broad context, in which there is so little consensus, presents challenges for an exploratory study.

› The main limitation of the study arises from the lack of involvement of children and young people in the study. Parents have assumptions and some concerns about children's sexual, gender and commercial worlds, but these assumptions and concerns need to be considered in light of children and young people's views and experiences of these worlds. Data gathered from parents and young adults indicate that they did not think of children and young people as having any significant capacity in matters of consumption and sexualisation. Other young adults, however, interviewed about their own recollections of practices of consumption and their adoption or rejection of self-sexualisation practices, both as children and as young adults, revealed choice-making and identity-making relating to consumption. Negotiation and compromise with parents, together with discernment and engagement in processes to enable them to identify with peers and to differentiate themselves from others, were also evident in data gathered from young adults. This finding is also supported by research with children and young people in the field of cultural studies.

1. Introduction and research design

1.1 Aim and objectives of the study

The study aims to explore the commercialisation and sexualisation of children in Ireland. The specific objectives of the study are to:

> comprehensively review the literature on the sexualisation and commercialisation of children;

> uncover and critically analyse the various concepts of 'childhood' evident in the academic, policy and popular discourses generated by this issue;

> ascertain the views and experiences of parents, as well as a small number of young adults and other stakeholders;

> review and analyse Irish and other national regulatory frameworks and initiatives to address the 'problems' of the sexualisation and commercialisation of children, and in so doing, to draw conclusions and make recommendations for Irish research, policy and practice.

The central research questions were as follows:

1. What is meant by the commercialisation and sexualisation of children in Irish society?
2. Has the commercialisation and sexualisation of children changed or intensified in recent years in Irish society, and if so, how is this manifest and in what sites?
3. What gendered and other key meanings are transmitted about and to children growing up in an Irish commercialised and sexualised culture?
4. What are the effects of the sexualisation and commercialisation of children as revealed in the literature and as perceived by parents?
5. What do existing data sources tell us about the experiences, understandings, values and practices of young people in Ireland in terms of how they relate to various dimensions of a commercialised and sexualised popular culture?
6. What are parents' concerns for their children as they relate to this culture? What strategies do they employ to address these concerns, what are their perspectives on their success or otherwise in this regard and what do they believe would support their efforts in this area?
7. What regulatory frameworks nationally and internationally have been developed and what are they seeking to achieve? How are children's rights conceptualised in such frameworks and what can we learn about these frameworks based on evaluative analyses and critical commentaries as to their effectiveness or otherwise?
8. What innovative research methodologies have been used in other contexts to study children and young people's consumption and their cultural worlds?

1.2 Research remit and design

The remit was to conduct an exploratory study on the commercialisation and sexualisation of children in Ireland for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), predominantly employing focus group methodology to elicit the views of parents, young adults and a small number of stakeholders. It also involved reviewing the literature on these topics and the regulatory frameworks in Ireland and in other countries for addressing these phenomena. The research project commenced in December 2012 and employed a qualitative approach. Most of the research was conducted in 2013 and a draft report was submitted to DCYA at the end of March 2014. Following an extensive peer review process, the final report was submitted at the end of September 2014.

The methodological strategy originally set out by DCYA was that the majority of data would be collected from focus group discussions with parents/guardians and stakeholders only (i.e. children and young people were not involved). Recognising the normative potential of focus groups, as well as the logistical difficulties for some parents attending such meetings, it was decided that data would also be collected in interviews with parents, either as individuals, in pairs or in couples. Thus, during the period May 2013 to January 2014, a total of nine focus

groups were conducted with parents/guardians and interviews were conducted with 26 individual parents, five couples and two individuals (two mothers who were acquainted with one another). In total, the views of 78 parents/guardians were accessed for the study (*see Appendix 1*).

In addition to this, and in response to a request from DYCA, three focus group interviews were conducted with 12 young adults (aged 18-22 years) and four individual interviews with adult stakeholders selected on the basis that they have contributed to the public/media discourse on commercialisation and sexualisation in the Irish context.

1.3   Parent recruitment and sample

Five research sites were identified in an effort to engage parents across Ireland, namely East (Dublin), West (Mayo and Galway), Midlands (Laois), Mid-West (Limerick and Clare) and South (Cork). Using a variety of strategies, calls seeking participation by parents were distributed. An information sheet directed at potential participants was prepared and adapted as required (*see Appendix 2*) and this included a form to be completed and returned by interested parents. The National Parents Council (Primary and Post-Primary sections) and the Cork office of Foróige (the national youth organisation) provided considerable assistance with the process of recruiting parent participants for the research. Posts informing potential participants about the research were placed on websites frequently accessed by parents. A request for parent participants was sent out via the e-mail exchange of Dublin City University and St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. Using the listings presented on the website www.schooldays.ie, post-primary schools displaying an e-mail address, and which were located in the specified research sites, were sent an e-mail with the project information sheet attached. In this e-mail, principals were asked to bring the research to the attention of students parents and/or a parents' association affiliated with the school.

Ongoing efforts were made to recruit a sample of parents who were as diverse as possible. The characteristics of the parents recruited were constantly monitored with the assistance of parent profile forms, with the intention of reaching out to parents who were not well represented. Additional efforts were made to target parents in the South and Mid-West of Ireland, fathers as well as parents from working-class backgrounds and different ethnic backgrounds. To try and achieve this diversity of sample, the Research Team posted information about the research on www.irishdads.ie, a dedicated parenting website for fathers. Contact was also made with Men's Sheds groups. Particular schools known to have a diverse profile of parents in terms of social class and ethnicity were selected and agreed to facilitate a school 'bag drop' (an information leaflet in students' school bags, for the attention of parents). Recognising an initially slow response to the call for participation in the South and Mid-West, an advertisement was placed in the UCC Diary, which appeared in the Cork newspaper, *The Evening Echo*, on 23 May 2013. E-mails were also sent to principals of primary schools in Limerick City and County as per the listings on www.schooldays.ie. The project information sheet was also distributed via the Mature Student Society in UCC. Traveller organisations, Pavee Point and the Travellers' Visibility Group were informed of the research and their assistance was solicited in order to access parents. Some of these efforts yielded a non-return or a small return in terms of numbers of parent participants, while others did not.

There is some diversity evident in terms of the composition of the final sample for the study. Key characteristics of the sample are as follows: married parents, separated/divorced parents, co-habiting parents, gay parents, non-Irish parents, foster parents, parents of very young and teenage children, parents of two children or fewer and parents of more than two children.

It is important to point out that while there is some representation, parents in lower socio-economic groups, different ethnic groups and fathers remained under-represented in the sample. It is also very probable that the Research Team accessed a sample of parents who were already very concerned about aspects of commercialisation or sexualisation. We have

to be mindful that the data gathered from parents tell us about what some of them (probably those already concerned) think about these issues, but not the extent to which their thoughts are shared by parents in general in the population. Details of the topics used to guide the focus group discussions and interviews with parents/guardians are given in Appendix 4. The findings gleaned from interviews conducted with parents are presented in Chapter 6.

1.4   Focus groups with young adults

To supplement the data obtained from parents/guardians, 12 young adults (aged 18-22 years) were interviewed in three small focus group discussions and in one pair interview. These young adults volunteered for the study following a call for participants in three third-level education settings. All were pursuing FETAC awards or other third-level qualifications in five different settings. The participants comprised three males and nine females, with one female being the mother of a three-year-old daughter (*see Appendix 3*). Broadly, the same themes covered in the adult focus group discussions and interviews were covered in those conducted with young adults (*see Appendix 4*). For the purpose of this report and to protect their identities, all of the young adult participants have been assigned a pseudonym.

It should be noted that the data generated from focus group discussions and interviews with the young adults (*see Chapter 7*) do not tell us to what extent their views and experiences are also those of children or younger people. It also has to be noted that the young adults interviewed perceived themselves to be entirely different in terms of views and life experiences from those of their younger siblings.

1.5   Stakeholder interviews

Individual interviews were conducted with four stakeholders. Their selection was predominantly informed by an analysis of the public discourse on commercialisation and sexualisation in Ireland, involving published opinions or claims made by experts or practitioners in the field. All of those interviewed have made contributions to the public/media discourse on sexualisation in the Irish context. The stakeholders were:

> Fiachra Ó Súilleabháin, Social Worker and Family Centre Acting Manager in Tusla – Child and Family Agency (the State agency, established in January 2014, with responsibility for child protection and for improving the well-being and outcomes for children in Irish society);

> Majella Ryan, Acting National Clinical Director of the CARI Foundation (a voluntary organisation providing child-centred and specialised therapy and support to children, families and groups affected by child sexual abuse);

> Maureen Griffin, Forensic Psychologist and Director of Internet Safety for Schools Ireland (an organisation she established in order to respond to the growing demand from schools for educational talks about the Internet and mobile technology safety across the school system);

> Stephen Lynam, Director of Retail Ireland at IBEC (the Irish Business and Employers Confederation).

Tailored interview schedules were prepared in advance of each interview. Findings from the stakeholder interviews are presented in Chapter 7. The Research Team appreciates that only a small stakeholder group was consulted and that there is greater scope to access the views of many more stakeholders on the issues being studied.

1.6   Conduct of fieldwork

Ethical approval for the research project was secured in January 2013 from the Social Research Ethics Committee of University College Cork. Focus groups, on average, lasted approximately one and a half to two hours. The same topic guide used to structure the interviews and focus group discussions with parents was used for the purpose of interviewing young adults (*see Appendix 4*), but with minor modifications or changes. At the outset, people were asked to identify what they understood by such terms as 'commercialisation' and 'sexualisation'. Questions were then asked to elicit how parents and young adults experienced different aspects of Irish consumer and retailing culture, as well as family practices pertaining to consumption and money management. The next section was more directly focused on the topic of sexualisation, concentrating on issues such as children's wear as well as gender and social class differentials. Interviewees were then asked their views about particular sites of consumption and sexualisation in the Irish context, which included ascertaining the importance of, and attitudes to, more traditional and newer forms of sexual and commercial media. Interviewees were asked to talk about parent-child negotiations where issues of sexualisation and commercialisation are concerned. Attitudes to making complaints, as well as awareness of, and views on, Ireland's regulatory landscape, were also elicited. Parents and young adults were also asked their views on what forms of regulation or education they supported or would welcome in an Irish context to address some of the concerns or issues they raised during the interview.

At the outset, participants were encouraged to be respectful of their fellow participants' viewpoints; it was explained that the focus group space was one where multiple diverse opinions could be freely voiced in a spirit of mutually respectful discussion and without reproach. Focus group venues included University College Cork, Dublin City University, participants' homes, the Fóroige office in Cork City and a range of other organisational or recreational spaces, including hotel lobbies or coffee shops. At the outset of each focus group and interview, participants were reminded of the purpose of the study, and any specific questions they had about the research were addressed. Once the researchers had ensured that all participants were clear about the research objectives and the use to which the data would be put, they were asked to complete a consent form (*see Appendix 5*) and in the case of focus groups involving parents, to sign an agreement to maintain the confidentiality of their fellow participants (*see Appendix 6*). All research meetings were recorded using a dictaphone, with the prior consent of all participants.

Upon completion of the interviews and focus groups, parent participants were given a debrief sheet (*see Appendix 7*) and pack containing full contact details of all members of the Research Team and a list of web resources and booklets on the themes of the research in the Irish context. One week after each of the interviews and focus groups took place, participants were contacted by e-mail to see if they had any further insights to share on the research topic, having had some time to reflect on the discussion. Some additional data were received in this way and are identified as such when presented in Chapter 6. The audio files were saved to a password-protected computer and send via a secure link to a reputable transcription service. All interview and focus group participants were given a pseudonym, as were any children named by parents in the course of interview or discussion.

1.7   Primary data analysis

After completed interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim, the coding was conducted. The transcribed data were approached with six specific questions in mind. These were:

1. How do participants predominantly understand the terms 'sexualisation' and 'commercialisation'?
2. What are identified by parents as prominent modes and sites of commercialisation and sexualisation of children?
3. What constructions of children are evident in the data provided by parents and how do they influence participants' parenting practices/interactions with children, as they relate to commercialisation and sexualisation?
4. What patterns and divergences are evident in the views and experiences of parents as a social group and what bodies of knowledge and parenting practices (or 'know-how') are socially available (or indeed unavailable) to certain parents to negotiate the issues being studied?
5. What are parents' views on questions of support, intervention and regulation with respect to children's protection, well-being and rights?
6. What positions are taken by parents on questions of social, corporate, institutional and individual responsibility where the issues of commercialisation and sexualisation are concerned?

The transcripts were divided in half and each transcript was coded manually and independently by two members of the Research Team, who compared their coding of the data and initial interpretations. Individual extracts of data were coded at least once and/or a number of times, as relevant. Apart from the thematic coding, which was the main approach, attention was also paid to ways of talking and to interesting verbal exchanges (although to a lesser extent due to time and space constraints). Preliminary analytic documents were shared between members of the Research Team, who further discussed, refined and developed these documents in accordance with their readings of the data. One of the aims of this report was to provide a rich thematic description of the dataset, so that readers would obtain a sense of participants' views and experiences in relation to the topics discussed. Quotations or extracts from the data gathered are used to support the analysis, albeit in a limited way, due to space restrictions. Data findings and analytic claims are not included in this report unless they were found or agreed to be plausible by the Research Team.

The ethical need to be mindful and respectful of the research subjects' views has also informed the data analysis. Care was taken by the Research Team to ensure that the findings and recommendations made are informed not only by the primary data gathered, but also with very close reference to the state of the scientific evidence gathered and discussed in other chapters of the report. Recommendations are made from the evidence assessed and are deemed to be sufficiently robust to justify them.

Members of the Research Team are aware that the dataset is very rich and has the potential to be analysed in different ways to yield different insights, but these are beyond the scope of the present report.

1.8   Review of the literature

Overview of relevant scholarship

Existing scholarship closely related to the main focus of this study was reviewed and involves descriptions of the key reviews conducted in other contexts for the purpose of informing policy on the commercialisation and sexualisation of children (*see Chapter 2*). The focus of the literature review is largely on the academic commentary on commercialisation and sexualisation, although the fact that there is an extensive popular literature on these issues is also acknowledged. Cognisance is taken of the high-profile contemporary (and in some instances divisive) academic debates that beset this field of study, particularly as they relate to the use of the terms 'commercialisation' and 'sexualisation'; empirical data on 'causes' and 'effects'; the unpacking of the discourses on these topics; the dominant constructions of parents and children in the narratives of commercialisation and sexualisation; and depictions of past and present in terms of continuity and difference. The broad focus is narrowed in the latter part of the literature review to address in greater detail the findings of studies that have involved parents, since the elicitation of parents' views provided the main impetus for this research.

Review of the national and international regulatory landscapes

The literature review took as its starting point the *Summary of Regulatory Frameworks in Four Selected Countries, for the Bailey Review of Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood,* compiled by Statham, Mooney and Phoenix in 2011. This summary document had been prepared to inform the Bailey Review team in the UK. The information gleaned from this source was supplemented by information from other sources, notably the most recent editions of the *Young Consumers Journal,* which provides overviews of regulatory environments governing advertising and marketing to children in a number of different international contexts. The sixth edition of *The Blue Book,* produced by the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA, 2010), although a little dated, proved a useful reference guide on self-regulatory systems and codes of advertising adopted in different countries. Progress reports on the Bailey and Byron reviews (Bailey, 2011; Byron, 2010) were also useful in terms of building an up-to-date picture of the regulatory environment in the UK where the commercialisation and sexualisation of children are concerned.

Other relevant material was accessed through the use of Google and Google Scholar, using such terms as 'codes of practice', 'children', 'regulation', 'marketing', 'advertising', 'sexualisation', 'commercialisation', 'country name' and various combinations of such terms. Attention was paid to ensuring that up-to-date sources were being accessed, given that regulations change over time. A broad conceptualisation of commercialisation and sexualisation was taken when writing Chapter 5 on the national and international regulatory environments, in order to include, among other issues, data privacy and regulations about food and drink consumption. The main European-wide or international initiatives (e.g. EU Directives) are also noted where relevant. Where practicable, a review of the formal complaints made to key regulatory bodies (e.g. the ASAI, the BAI and the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner) on issues deemed relevant to the protection of children, together with the outcomes of these complaints, was also conducted and is presented as part of this work (*see Appendices 8, 9 and 10*).

1.9   Structure of the report

Following this Introduction, **Chapter 2** provides an **overview of the literature** on commercialisation and sexualisation, in which key reviews designed to inform policy are outlined and critically analysed. Attention is given to meanings of the terms 'commercialisation' and 'sexualisation', and to a discussion on how these terms are deployed. The debates generated by findings of predominantly psychologically oriented scholarship on commercialisation and sexualisation and other fields of enquiry are profiled, as are the cultural continuities and shifts evident when examining these issues. The focus is then narrowed to consider in more detail the findings of research involving parents on commercialisation and sexualisation in view of the fact that the need to access parents' views provided the rationale for this study.

Chapter 3 focuses on **public discourses in Ireland** (Dáil and Seanad debates, NGO contributions, parents and media) on commercialisation and sexualisation as they relate to children. The employment of a lens provided by the construction of the problem, the solution and the child is undertaken to good effect to explore how public discourses are commonly deployed to inform our understandings of these issues and with reference to selected sexual 'public panics' (Mulholland, 2013, p. 164) in Irish society of late (illustrated by three case studies).

In **Chapter 4**, a focus on selected **key trends in Irish society** sets the scene for a more detailed examination of the regulatory infrastructure and educational responses to commercialisation and sexualisation as they relate to children's lives and experiences.

Chapter 5 focuses on key features of the **regulatory landscape and the measures pursued at international and European level** in the context of selected countries. This review provides a significant point of reference from an Irish point of view.

Chapters 6 and 7 present the main findings of the primary data from this research study. Chapter 6 provides an in-depth analysis of the **perspectives of parents** who participated in the research, while Chapter 7 takes cognisance of **young adults' views** on these issues, supplemented by additional data from key stakeholders who, because of their professional backgrounds, were considered to offer interesting insights into some of the issues raised by the parents and young adults interviewed.

Chapter 8 focuses on the **policy and practice implications** emerging from this study, with a number of recommendations put forward. Insights gleaned from other studies into how research with children on these topics might be progressed in an Irish context is also considered.

The many reports and articles that informed or were reviewed for this study are provided in the **Bibliography** section.

A number of **Appendices** are included, detailing specific aspects of the study.
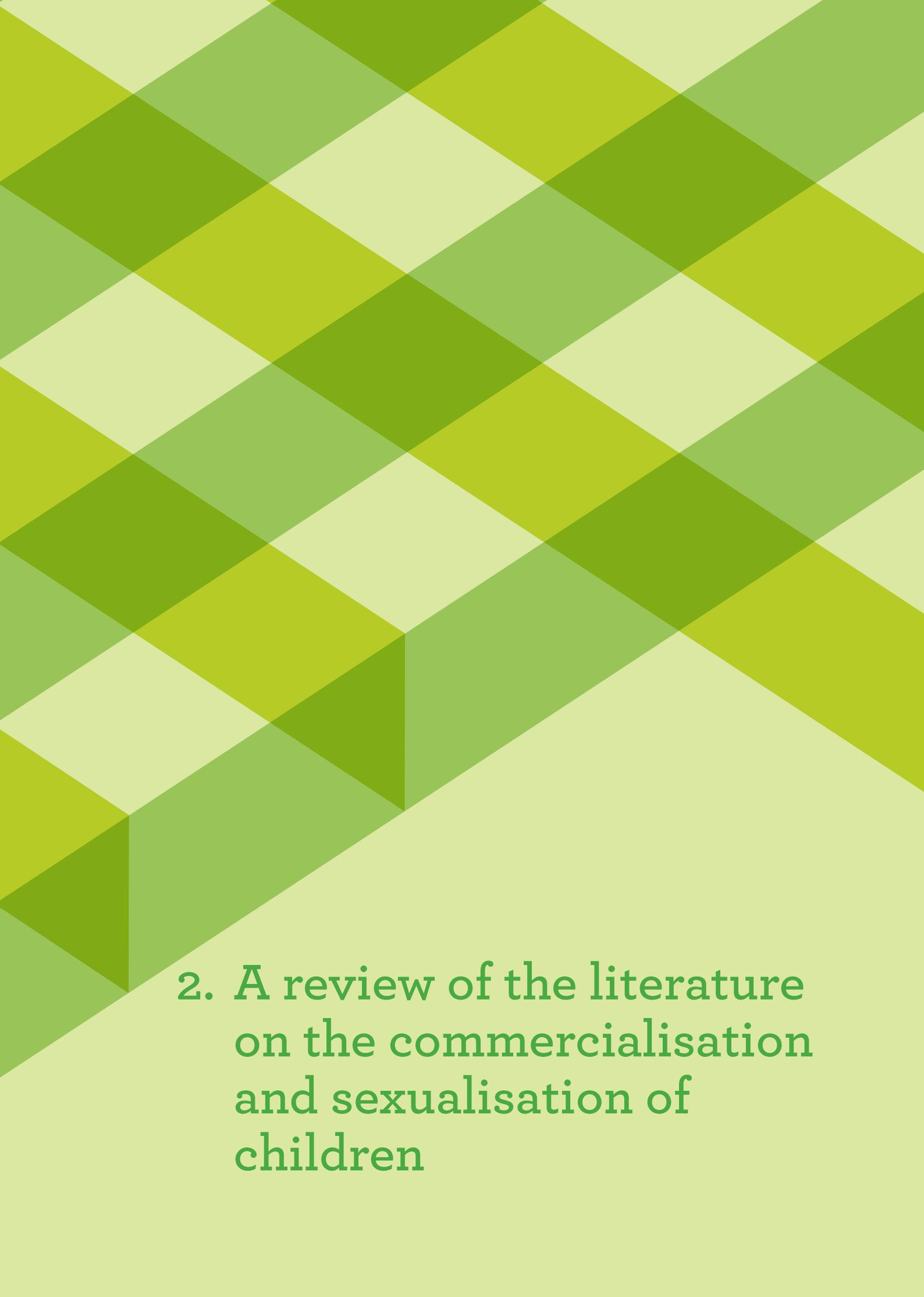
2. A review of the literature on the commercialisation and sexualisation of children

The main purpose of this literature review is to summarise and discuss recent work on the commercialisation and sexualisation of children. The review casts an eye over the landscape of public, predominantly academic and policy discourses, and the actual research data on commercialisation and sexualisation, so as to fully understand the context in which this Irish-based research is taking place.

As is evident in this review, the commercialisation and sexualisation of children have become significant areas of academic study since the 1990s, with the concept of sexualisation being in the public consciousness for some time (Marvin, 2012). Governments in diverse contexts have increasingly commissioned research to assess the perceived problems of commercialisation and/or sexualisation as they relate to children.

The chapter begins by acknowledging the landmark reports published, which have informed public policy in a number of different countries and have generated a significant amount of commentary and debate in the past decade. This leads on to a discussion of the key methodological problems and gaps in the research to date, as identified by key authorities in these fields. Looking at the ways in which the discourses of commercialisation and sexualisation have evolved over time, we identify a common tendency (also noted by other academics) for public discourse to conflate or confuse a number of different conceptual issues, by paying attention to the evidence base which exists, or not, in support of claims made. In particular, we query the idea that sexualisation and commercialisation are new phenomena and highlight the particular focus on girls that is evident in discussions around sexualisation. The review is also concerned with the way in which constructions of childhood – as the seat of innocence – have steered discourse over time, with an examination of how this has come to be reconfigured by contemporary commentators trying to understand its implications.

Due to our particular research remit, we have attended to the literature and research studies in two domains: those that focus on parents' perspectives on these issues and those that provide insights into parent-child relationships as they are embedded in social and cultural contexts of consumption.

2.1 International reports on commercialisation and sexualisation

This research joins the confluence of international debate on commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood and of children. In addition to critical academic commentary, a number of reports produced have become key reference points, which have incited both support and critique.

Australia

Rush and La Nauze (2006)

The first of these is a report provocatively entitled **Corporate Paedophilia: Sexualisation of children in Australia**, written by Emma Rush and Andrea la Nauze and published by the Australian Institute (an independent policy think tank) in October 2006. Explaining the title of the report, the authors note that '*corporate paedophilia is a metaphor coined by Phillip Adams to describe the selling of products to children before they are able to understand advertising and thus before they are able to consent to the process of corporate-led consumption*' (Rush and La Nauze, 2006a, p. 1). The report is concerned exclusively with the effects of sexualisation on children, identified as those under 12 years of age, and it is argued that '*public concern about the sexualisation of children is particularly strong for children who are still at primary school*'. Defining sexualisation broadly as '*the act of giving someone or something a sexual character*', the authors acknowledge that there is a sexual dimension to pre-pubertal childhood development, but make the distinction that their concern is with sexualisation which '*captures the slowly developing sexuality of children and moulds it into stereotypical forms of adult sexuality*'.

In their report, Rush and La Nauze (2006a) critically analyse the content of teen magazines and state that their report engages with the issue of sexualisation particularly as it pertains to the physical appearance of children. In considering how children are sexualised, the authors argue that clothing and accessories, physical poses and cosmetics are all means by which this takes place. Following a survey of advertising material, they state that they *'discovered that children were sexualised for two quite different kinds of purposes: to sell products to children, and to sell products to adults'*. They outline the risks to children that are posed by sexualisation, as follows (*ibid*, pp. 35-46):

› **physical harm** (specific reference is made here to the risk that the increasing sexualisation of children is contributing to eating disorders, which arise from girls' quest to achieve 'the ideal body');

› **psychological harm** (this relates to the issue of body dissatisfaction as well as a rise in levels of attention-seeking sexual behaviour);

› **sexual harm** (in particular, the authors posit that the sexualisation of children could promote paedophilia. They also contend that sexual harm to young people could arise due to a long-term trend for sexual activity to occur earlier in the teenage years, with associated increased potential for unwanted sex and the contraction of sexually transmitted infections).

A second report by the same authors, entitled ***Letting Children Be Children: Stopping the sexualisation of children in Australia***, was published in December 2006 (Rush and La Nauze, 2006b). The focus of this report was the regulatory landscape around sexualisation in Australia and the overarching conclusion was the need for better regulation. The authors call for political commitment to address the concerns raised in the context of the silence and denial with which the earlier report was received by advertisers, retailers and marketers.

USA

APA Task Force (2007)

In 2007, the American Psychological Association (APA) published the ***Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls***. The Task Force was established in 2005 by the APA's Council of Representatives at the recommendation of the APA's Committee on Women in Psychology. The work of the APA is exclusively psychological in its focus and the role of the Task Force was *'to examine and summarise the best psychological theory, research and clinical experience addressing the sexualisation of girls via media and other cultural messages, including the prevalence of these messages and their impact on girls, and include attention to the role and impact of race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status'* (APA, 2007, p. v).

In its very broad definition of 'sexualisation', the APA acknowledges healthy sexuality as *'an important component of both physical and mental health'* (*ibid*, p. 1), before going on to outline four instances when a person is being sexualised:

› a person's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behaviour, to the exclusion of other characteristics;

› a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy;

› 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; and/or

› sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person.

The last condition is considered particularly relevant to children.

The APA's 2007 report presents a range of evidence for the sexualisation of girls from an array of sources, including:

› cultural contributions (media, television, music videos, music lyrics, movies, cartoons and animation, magazines, sports media, video/computer games, the Internet, advertising, products and cosmetics);

› interpersonal contributions (e.g. societal messages that contribute to the sexualisation of girls and that come through girls' interpersonal relationships, for example, with parents, teachers, and peers);

› intrapsychic contributions, which relate to the self-objectification of girls and women who want the clothes and accessories that make them 'sexy'.

On the basis of the evidence summarised in the report, the APA Task Force details some of the consequences of sexualisation on girls. The report states that '*girls exposed to sexualising and objectifying media are more likely to experience body dissatisfaction, depression, and lower self-esteem. This cognitive diminishment, as well as the belief that physical appearance rather than academic or extracurricular achievement is the best path to power and acceptance, may influence girls' achievement levels and opportunities later in life*'. Furthermore, the report states that '*girls' sexual development may be affected as they are exposed to models of passivity*', while also highlighting the impact of sexualisation on girls' relationships with one another and with boys and men.

The APA Task Force suggests some approaches to counteracting the influence of sexualisation:

› The first of these suggested approaches is working through schools and formal education, within which the authors advocate media literacy training, the provision of access to athletics and other extra-curricular activities that focus on body competence rather than body appearance, and a comprehensive programme of sexuality education.

› The second approach centres on working through the family and includes suggestions such as mediation and co-viewing, during which parents and other family members can help girls to interpret sexualising cultural messages in ways that mitigate or prevent harm. Also suggested is the role of religion, spirituality and mediation, given that '*organized religious and other ethical instruction often begins within the family and can offer girls important practical and psychological alternatives to the values conveyed by popular culture*'. Activism by parents and families is also mentioned under this approach.

› The third approach involves working directly with girls and girls' groups to resist 'sexualisation'. This approach centres on the empowerment of girls and women to resist sexualising forces and to devise their own alternatives through their involvement in girls' groups and also the World Wide Web, which the authors deem to have '*enormous potential to encourage girls to critique the culture, explore cultural messages, and develop agency*'.

The recommendations made in the APA Task Force's report are structured around five areas: research; practice; education and training; public policy; and public awareness.

Undoubtedly, the APA Task Force's 2007 report has been one of the most influential of these reports both in the USA and beyond. Its findings have been cited in many academic and popular sources as evidence of sexualisation and its negative effects.

UK

Byron (2008)

In the UK, a report by clinical psychologist Tanya Byron, entitled *Safer Children in a Digital World*, was published in 2008. Byron had carried out an independent review, at the request of the British Prime Minister, of the risks to children's safety and well-being of exposure to potentially harmful or inappropriate material on the Internet and in video games. Her remit

also involved assessing the evidence and adequacy of existing measures to help prevent children from being exposed to such material. It also sought to help parents understand and manage the risks of access to inappropriate content and to make recommendations for improvements or additional action.

Byron's (2008) research approach involved a call for evidence from children, focus group discussions with parents and children, and consultations with children's panels, as well as a children's competition that encouraged children to send in text, pictures and other multimedia entries on how to stay 'netsmart' and 'gamesmart'. Three literature reviews were also conducted to inform the overall report: a review of the media-effects literature on video games and Internet use (Buckingham *et al*, 2007); a review of the most up-to-date knowledge on brain development in childhood (Johnson and Leader, 2008); and a general review on child development (Goswami, 2008).

Byron advocated a three-pronged approach to managing the risks to children online – reducing availability, restricting access and increasing resilience. She argued that a more strategic approach involving all the various stakeholders who would work together was required in order to make this happen. Her most significant recommendation related to the establishment of the UK Council on Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS), which would report to the Prime Minister. The purpose of this Council was to take the lead in implementing the recommendations made in her review.

Other recommendations by Byron (2008) related to improving regulation where the Internet is concerned, such as the introduction of a monitored voluntary code of practice on the moderation of user-generated content; a requirement that computers sold for use in the home have Kitemarked[1] parental control software; measures to ensure safe Internet searching; and strategies to support vulnerable children and young people.

Byron put much emphasis on the need for a sustained information and education strategy targeted at the general public and more specific initiatives aimed at children and parents. To this end, she proposed that the UKCCIS become the authoritative one-stop-shop for child Internet safety. She made a number of recommendations for schools towards ensuring e-safety best practice, as well as for other professional groups who work with children and who need to be supported in keeping children and young people safe online. She recommended that parenting courses should include e-safety and that all parenting experts should be trained in e-safety.

In relation to video games, Byron claimed that regulation needed to be stepped up, that more could be done to simplify and reform the age classification system and to raise parental awareness in this regard. She also encouraged the retail industry to ensure a more consistent approach to the sale of video games, to provide better in-store information and to enforce statutory age ratings. She called for better information for parents in terms of parental controls on consoles and she urged the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) and Pan European Game Information (PEGI) to work together to rate online games and to drive up safety standards for children and young people, under the auspices of UKCCIS. She also encouraged more dialogue between Government, education and the games industry to explore opportunities for the benefits of game-based learning to be evaluated in educational environments.

In 2010, when Byron reviewed progress on the recommendations she had made in her 2008 review, she welcomed the establishment of UKCCIS and the strides it was making in terms of the development of its national strategy, the launch of a digital code, and its efforts in the areas of public awareness and education. However, she believed that if the UK was to become a world leader in digital safety where children are concerned, more speedy progress in policy

---

[1] Kitemark, a registered certification mark of quality and safety, is owned and operated by BSI, a Business Standards Company. *See* http://www.kitemark.com/kitemark-4-u/for-parents/child-safety-online.php

delivery and actions was required and she made a number of additional recommendations to this effect, some of which included strengthening UKCCIS as the main body driving policy and practice in this field (Byron, 2010).

Buckingham (2009)

In 2009 a report by Buckingham, entitled *The Impact of the Commercial World on Children's Wellbeing*, followed an independent assessment conducted by a multidisciplinary panel and funded by the UK's Department for Children, Schools and Families. The work involved the collection of different kinds of evidence for evaluation by the panel as to the impact of 'commercialisation', but the remit did not extend to making policy recommendations. The 'commercial world' and 'wellbeing' were defined in very broad terms in the report and it also elaborated on the very broad contextual features of British society that are relevant to understanding children's everyday experiences of the commercial world. These features included the advent of new technologies allowing individualised access and use, growth in commercially funded media, greater ubiquity of advertising and marketing in more spaces and utilising new techniques, market globalisation, as well as widespread support for free market economic policies. Changes in family structures and family life, such as household spending and family members' use of time and space, were some of the important factors addressed as part of the cultural and social backdrop.

Despite the lack of independent evidence of positives from commercial engagement, Buckingham's report sought to give as much time to identifying and exploring the positives as well as the negatives for children. These 'positives' related to the opportunities provided by the commercial world for children to learn, socialise, create, discover and experiment, play, build friendships and exercise choice. But in the report it was acknowledged that it is not always possible to separate out positives from negatives. While further regulation, it was reported, might be necessary, it was argued that it should only proceed if underpinned by a reliable evidence base and clear understanding of potential negative, unintended consequences. Media and consumer literacy initiatives were considered necessary for as long as the commercial world exists and as a necessary *accompaniment* to regulation, not a replacement. In terms of regulation and policy outcomes, it was noted that a precautionary principle could be utilised to justify intervention if the evidence is not definitive that harm is caused, but rather based on the risk that harm could be caused. The precautionary principle has since been used by campaigners as providing sufficient justification for action to be taken to extend regulation of advertising and marketing to children.

Also identified in Buckingham's (2009) report was a broad research agenda designed to fill gaps in knowledge. One of the gaps related to the scope and scale of the UK children's market and the changing strategies being employed; another related to the need to understand the impact of the commercial world on children, taking account of a fuller range of influences in their lives.

Buckingham *et al* (2010)

Between June and December 2009, a team of researchers conducted research for the Scottish Parliament and prepared a report entitled *Sexualised goods aimed at children* (Buckingham *et al*, 2010). The research was concerned not only with clothing, but also with cosmetics, toys, food, bedding, stationery, electrical items and accessories such as hair products. As noted in the Introduction, in terms of offering a definition of what is meant by 'sexualisation', Buckingham *et al* challenged the notion that there is a consensus surrounding the meaning of sexualisation and they were critical of the APA Task Force's definition of sexualisation in its 2007 report (*see above*). In particular, Buckingham *et al* take issue with the manner in which the APA's definition provides no way of distinguishing between 'sexual' material and that which is 'sexualised'.

One aspect of the methodology used in Buckingham *et al*'s (2010) research was a survey of retail outlets in shopping malls in high street locations in three Scottish cities (Glasgow, Perth and Inverness), as well as retailers on virtual sites (including Amazon.co.uk, Littlewoods, Topman, New Look, Asda Living, Toys "R" Us, Disney Store and Claire's). The study was interested not only in the type of materials on sale, but also in the location of these goods in stores because '*the potential meaning of goods can depend very much on how they are displayed and labelled in stores, where they are located, and the publicity material that surrounds them*' (*ibid*, p. 17). In total, the researchers made 38 observational visits to retail outlets, undertook limited ethnographic work in some stores to observe the ways that potential customers engaged with the products and collected visual, organisational and marketing data from virtual stores. Further to this survey of retailers, the researchers also sought to elicit parents' views and did so by conducting a total of nine focus groups in which 43 parents were engaged, eight of whom were men and the remainder were women. The research took place in schools, a university and a hair salon for children. The parents were from diverse family, sexuality, religious and socio-economic backgrounds, and were asked for their perspectives on the meaning of 'childhood', the extent to which the sale of sexualised goods is a problem for parents, and their opinions on what might be done in this regard.

The study also engaged directly with young people. The researchers used participatory methods with a total of 57 children aged 12-14 years, again from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Three small group activities were undertaken during English and Media Studies classes, and involved product design according to simulated briefs, putting together a shopping basket for a 10-year-old, and applying a diamond-ranking scheme to nine statements according to the extent to which the children agreed or disagreed with them. On the basis of this research, it was found that '*children recognise and understand these issues [of sexualisation] in different ways from adults' (ibid, p. 3)*. The researchers also state that '*children are not in any sense simply the dupes of marketers, although neither are they wholly free to make their own choices and decisions*' (*ibid*, p. 4). The report also demonstrates the link between the construction and development of children's identities in part through what they consume, and argues that while the complex issue of sexualisation is not amenable to simple explanation or policy intervention, it is '*misguided to suggest that the ultimate responsibility for dealing with sexualisation should be down to the individual*' (*ibid*).

Papadopoulos (2010)

In 2010, psychologist Linda Papadopoulos produced a report entitled **_Sexualisation of Young People Review_**. The compilation of the report arose when Papadopoulos was approached by the British Home Secretary and asked to conduct an independent review on the impact of sexualisation of young girls on violence against women. As she explains in the Foreword to the review, '*it quickly became evident that we could not talk about girls without acknowledging the concomitant impact on boys and the hyper-masculinised images and messages that surround them*' (Papadopoulos, 2010, p. 3). Consequently, the scope of the review was broadened to look at the hyper-sexualisation and objectification of girls and the hyper-masculinisation of boys.

The methodology employed in the preparation of this review is described as 'a critical, thorough and comprehensive desk-based review of available data on the sexualisation of young people' (*ibid*, p. 17). The material reviewed included existing Government research and statistics, lobby group publications and academic journals. Further to this, a call for evidence was issued to stakeholders for their views on the sexualisation of young people and possible links with violence.

Papadopoulos' (2010) review offers the following definition of 'sexualisation' – '*The imposition of adult sexuality onto children and young people before they are capable of dealing with it, mentally, emotionally or physically*' (*ibid*, p. 23). She claims that '*we should be careful that we do not indiscriminately apply the notion of sexualisation so that any expression of sexuality by children is seen as wrong or problematic*'. As a definition, it is perceived as problematic for

relying on a moral and very questionable assumption that commercial media, constructed as a monolithic force, is capable of destroying what would otherwise be a kind of natural, healthy sexual development in children (Buckingham, 2011).

Based on the review, Papadopoulos makes a number of recommendations around the following themes:

1. **Education and schools** – Promoting gender equality in schools; statutory Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education and sex and relationships education; media literacy and encouraging activism; working with young people outside of mainstream education, digital literacy and the Internet; positive role models for children; support for children who have been abused. Among Papadopoulos' specified recommendations in this area are the following (*ibid*, p. 77-78):
   » primary schools should make specific reference to the influence of the media on body image and personal identity;
   » a 'whole school' approach to media literacy would reduce the burden on PSHE education, ensure that relevant links are made in other subjects and effectively mainstream gender stereotyping throughout the curriculum;
   » digital literacy is made a compulsory part of the national curriculum for children from the age of five onwards;
   » the Government should work with Internet service providers to block access to pro-anorexia and pro-bulimia websites.

2. **Media and awareness-raising** – A national campaign to tackle teenage relationship abuse; a working group to address the sexualisation of women and girls by the media; media awards; support and guidance for parents; advertising and magazines; music videos; video-on-demand services; computers and networked gaming. Among Papadopoulos' specified recommendations in this area are that (*ibid*, p. 80-82):
   » the Government launches an online 'one-stop-shop' to allow the public to voice their concerns, with an onus on regulatory authorities to take action against irresponsible marketing which sexualises children;
   » the introduction of a system of ratings symbols for photographs to show the extent to which they have been altered;
   » broadcasters are required to ensure that music videos featuring sexual posing or sexually suggestive lyrics are broadcast only after the 'watershed'.

3. **Working with businesses and retailers** – Corporate responsibility; 'lads' mags'; recruitment. Among Papadopoulos' specified recommendations in this area are that (*ibid*, p. 83):
   » guidelines should be issued following consultation with major clothing retailers and parents' groups, so that a broad consensus can be reached with regard to what is appropriate for different age groups;
   » the existing voluntary code for retailers regarding the placement of 'lads' mags' should be replaced by a mandatory code, allowing customers to report retailers who continue to place such magazines at children's eye level and/or next to publications aimed at children and young people.

4. **Research** – A multidisciplinary approach to sexualisation; improving the evidence base. Among Papadopoulos' specified recommendations in this area is that (*ibid*, p. 84):
   » funding be made available for research that will strengthen the evidence base. She argues that there is a particular need for longitudinal research; research into the impact of sexualisation on black and minority ethnic groups, gay and lesbian groups and disabled populations; and carefully designed ethical research into the impact on child populations.

Mason *et al* (2011)

In June 2011, the Office of the Children's Commissioner in England, in conjunction with Amplify (which is the Commissioner's Children and Young People's Advisory Group), published a report by Mason *et al* (2011) entitled ***Children, young people and the commercial world***. (This report, in turn, was submitted as part of the evidence for the Bailey Review, entitled ***Letting Children Be Children***, in 2011 – *see below*.) The methodology used to collect data in the Mason *et al* (2011) study consisted of a residential weekend during which 19 children and young people took part in focused discussions on 'the commercialisation of childhood'. Further to this, an online questionnaire was devised on the basis of those discussions, which went live in January 2011. This survey was completed by 552 children and young people throughout England, ranging in age from under eight to 18 years. The questionnaire asked them about the amount of money they have to spend and the influences on their spending decisions, the pressures on them as well as the pressures that they believe are on adults, and finally their views on commercialisation. The following are the key findings of the research (*ibid*, p. 33):

> › Children and young people identify peer pressure and a fear of bullying to be the biggest influence on their spending. However, at the same time, children wanted to dress like their friends in order to help them feel they belong.
> › Celebrity endorsement of products did not feature as highly in the factors influencing children and young people's consumption as had been expected, with celebrities' personalities being more significant than the products they endorse.
> › A key issue that emerged from the research was the fear among children and young people of being perceived as 'poor'.
> › Children and young people are aware that the commercial world targets them in different ways. However, this is not seen by them to be a problem. They believe that the pressures brought by commercialisation are not unique to children and apply in the same way to adults.

Bailey (2011)

The Bailey Review, entitled ***Letting Children Be Children***, was published in June 2011. The impetus for the Bailey Review was enshrined in political commitment when the 2010 Coalition Agreement made a commitment to deal with, and protect children from, the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood. On the basis of this commitment, the Minister of State for Children, Sarah Teather, MP, asked Reg Bailey, the Chief Executive of the Mothers' Union, to lead an independent review of the commercialisation and sexualisation of children. Studies that preceded the Bailey Review provided a foundational starting point; these included the purposely prepared *Summary of Regulatory Frameworks* by Statham *et al* (2011) and the *Review of Recent Literature* by Phoenix (2011), as well as the reviews conducted by Papadopoulos (2010) and Byron (2008).

The Bailey Review was conducted over a six-month period and a variety of methodologies were employed, as follows: an online call for evidence (completed by 1,000 parents); a face-to-face nationally representative Omnibus Survey (in which 1,025 parents and 520 children and young people took part); interviews and focus groups (in which 70 parents participated); and a survey organised by the Office for the Children's Commissioner for England and their Children and Young People Advisory Group, Amplify, (in which 552 children and young people took part). Further to this, submissions were made to Bailey following a discussion of the Review, facilitated by the National Children's Bureau and held by the Children and Youth Board of the Department for Education, as well as 120 submissions received from organisations in response to the call for evidence. Bailey met individually with more than 40 organisations and experts, and the Review also states that the Research Team received telephone calls, e-mails and letters from members of the public who wished to share their views. One of the results of the Omnibus Survey conducted was that *'almost nine out of ten parents surveyed agreed with the statement that "these days children are under pressure to grow up too quickly"'* (Bailey, 2011, p. 6).

The Bailey Review is structured around four thematic areas and associated recommendations:

1. **The 'wallpaper' of children's lives**

   Addressing commercialisation and sexualisation as the 'wallpaper' of children's lives, recommendations in the Bailey Review are (*ibid*, p. 14):

   » ensuring that magazines and newspapers with sexualised images on their covers are not in easy sight of children;

   » reducing the amount of on-street advertising containing sexualised imagery in locations where children are likely to see it;

   » ensuring that the content of pre-watershed television programming better meets parents' expectations;

   » introducing age rating for music videos;

   » making it easier for parents to block adult and age-restricted material from the Internet.

2. **Clothing, products and services for children**

   Under the theme of 'clothing, products and services for children', the Bailey Review's sole recommendation is for the development of a retail code of good practice on retailing to children (*ibid*, p. 16).

3. **Children as consumers**

   Under the theme of 'children as consumers', the Bailey Review recommends the following (*ibid*, p. 17):

   » ensuring that the regulation of advertising reflects more closely parents' and children's views;

   » prohibiting the employment of children as brand ambassadors and in peer-to-peer marketing;

   » defining a child under the age of 16 years in all types of advertising regulation;

   » raising parental awareness of marketing and advertising techniques;

   » quality assurance for media and commercial literacy resources and education for children.

4. **Making parents' voices heard**

   Finally, under the theme of 'making parents' voices heard', the Bailey Review makes the following recommendations (*ibid*, p. 18):

   » ensuring greater transparency in the regulatory framework by creating a single website for regulators;

   » making it easier for parents to express their views to businesses about goods and services.

The Netherlands and France

In addition to these reports from Australia, the UK and the USA, the Dutch Government proposed a policy against the sexualisation of girls and young women in an ***Emancipation Strategy, 2008-2011*** (Duits and Van Zoonen, 2011). The French Parliament, following the publication of photographs of a number of young girls made up and dressed up in ways considered inappropriate for their ages in the 2010 December issue of *Vogue* magazine, produced a report entitled ***Against Hyper-Sexualisation: A New Fight for Equality***, calling for a ban on certain kinds of 'adult' clothing for children and on beauty competitions for young girls (Willsher, 2012).

2.2 A summary of the critical commentary on reports and reviews informing policy-making

The APA Task Force report (2007), the UK Home Office review (Papadopolous, 2010), the Bailey Review (2011) and the Australian Institute reports (Rush and La Nauze, 2006a and 2006b) have all been criticised for failing to distinguish between sexual, sexualising and objectifying representations. Inherent in the reports, it is argued, is the assumption that all sexual representations are sexualising, objectifying and ultimately harmful (Duschinsky, 2012; Vanwesenbeeck, 2009; Bragg *et al*, 2013). Below, we examine some of the critiques of particular reports in greater detail.

APA Task Force (2007)

The reliance on 'sexual objectification' in the 2007 *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls* has been highlighted as particularly problematic on the grounds that it evades clear and consistent definition or understanding (Lerum and Dworkin, 2009). For example, Lerum and Dworkin (2009) argue that critical questions surrounding the contextual meanings of 'sexualisation' and 'sexual objectification' are eschewed so that, for example, the notion that sexualisation may contain potential for agency, resistance or positive sexual health is merely put to one side. According to the APA, when any one of four criteria is met, sexualisation is manifested. But for many others, these criteria are just too inclusive and imprecise (Lerum and Dworkin, 2009; Buckingham, 2011). Many argue that complicated, multidimensional social issues (or indeed problems in some instances) tend to be reduced to simple cause-and-effect logic in *Report of the APA Task Force* and in other reports/reviews listed above (Buckingham, 2011; Bragg *et al*, 2013; Egan, 2013). For example, when referring to the APA Task Force's report, Lerum and Dworkin (2009) draw attention to the problematic assumption put forward that sexualised images all have the same message and the same impact, which generalises all sexualised material as negative and damaging to women. Even if much sexualised media content and imagery is crude, offensive and denigrating for girls and women, its effects, as Vanwesenbeeck (2009) suggests, are more diverse, ambiguous and multilayered. Supporting this idea, the view that popular culture is not uniform, but more fragmented and variegated than ever before, is espoused by Duits and Van Zoonen (2011) and Egan (2013).

Some critics have highlighted the significant limitations in the empirical claims made in the APA Task Force's report. The report drew on findings from other studies which were examining variables other than sexualisation, but these findings were then taken as evidence of sexualisation after the fact (Egan and Hawkes, 2009; Egan, 2013). The concern for children presented in all the reports listed above casts them as uniquely at risk of being influenced by advertising and pawns of market forces, possibly exaggerating the cognitive deficits in children and overestimating the cognitive abilities of adults (Egan, 2013).

Buckingham *et al* (2010) critique the APA Task Force's report on the basis that '*the large majority of the research studies cited relate to adults and not children*', as well as the fact that '*there is no discussion of the sexualisation of boys, but only of the effects upon them of the sexualisation of girls and women*', a problem which Buckingham *et al*, with others, argue is replicated across the literature in this area. One notable exception identified by Egan (2013) is the Family Lives and TeenBoundaries (2012) report entitled *All of our concerns: Commercialisation, sexualisation and hypermasculinity*, which builds on the Bailey Review (2011) and seeks to address some of the issues not covered in it. Indeed, Egan (*ibid*, p. 64) states that boys '*are on the side*' in these reports because their (hetero)sexuality is presumed active and present, unlike girls. Boys' sexual objectification is thus presumed highly unlikely. The problem of the sexualisation of boys, if discussed at all, is typically constructed in terms of the cultivation of a pornographic sensibility.

Papadopolous (2010)

In the UK Home Office review by Papadopolous (2010), the connections made between the sexualisation of girls and violence against women, while being welcomed by some working in the field of sexual violence, has been criticised by others for coming too close to the 'blame the victim' phenomenon (Bragg *et al*, 2011) and for eschewing a multicausal model of violence against women, which is more accurate and more useful politically (Egan, 2013). Furthermore, Duschinsky (2013), drawing on the ideas of Gill (2006), laments the opportunity lost in the UK Home Office review to challenge the sexist imperatives facing women in contemporary society by framing the problem of sexualisation in too essentialist terms, as a threat to the innocence of girls.

Bailey Review (2011)

The Bailey Review (2011) came under criticism for its provision of definitions and for failing to adequately acknowledge complexity in this field (Attwood *et al*, 2012; Bragg, 2012). It was also challenged for not taking adequate account of the range of academic evidence, favouring instead to adopt a more pragmatic approach by asking questions in ways designed to get particular answers (Attwood *et al*, 2012).

2.3   Children, commercialisation and sexualisation

A 19th-century phenomenon

Researchers have increasingly demonstrated that issues of commercialisation, sexualisation and childhood have a long social history, whereby certain issues become framed as problematic or positive in particular ways at particular times. Buckingham (2012) traced marketing to children back to the 19th century, when manufacturers began producing children's toys and clothing en masse. Reiterating this, Rose (2010) stated how speedy innovation in the design of boys' clothing in the late 19th century was used to drive consumer demand, and as a result, it became a focus for peer competition and bullying in the playground.

Cook (2000) traced the genealogy of commercialised childhood to the early decades of the 20th century, drawing on historical retailing literature in the USA to reveal constructions of the child as '*a knowing desiring, consuming entity*'. He argued that the 1930s marked a clear and distinct shift in trade discourses and practices from mother to child. Early working models of the child as consumer were formed by researchers, prompted by retailers witnessing how the likes and dislikes of children informed mothers' buying decisions, particularly when choosing girls' clothing. He documents the many ways in which children's agency was seized upon by marketers to promote and sell products, and explains how the shift that occurred in the context of major societal developments from the 1920s onwards (such as age grading and compulsory schooling, the growth of youth peer cultures, the popularisation of child psychology) refocused institutions and reoriented forms of knowledge to create the child subject.

Cross (2002) wrote about children as '*the portals of the world of consumption*' from the 1900s until the 1930s in the USA, when romantic notions of children as '*wondrous innocents*' were adapted for the purpose of advertising all kinds of products. Parents were promised rejuvenation and fulfilment at the sight of their children's wonder and delight upon receiving gifts or on first seeing new products in the home. How girls were targeted as consumers in the USA (long before the arrival of the market research categories of teen or tween) is a strong feature in a number of essays in the collection of essays edited by Kearney (2011).

In Ireland, children may have been defined by their lack of any kind of spending power or by their saving practices rather than by their spending. However, Rutherford (2015) has documented the significant growth in the toy industry in Ireland during the 1870s; she noted that advertisements at the time for the mass-produced modern doll figure drew attention to her more hyper-idealised feminine features (long hair), her prettiness and

style, in contrast to the traditional wooden and rag dolls, not noted for their beauty. She also took account of the existence then of a lingering nostalgia for the child lost in the face of increasing materialisation associated with the industrial age. Holohan (2013) investigated the manifestations of a growing commercialised youth culture in Ireland in the 1960s, which concerned adults. Older people also summon up memories of their consumption and the styles they adopted to be seen to be 'with it' in times past. For example, O'Halloran (2014) recalls going to dances as a teenager in the 1950s: '*If you wanted to be "with it", and we all did, you had to dress the part … deviation from this strict dress code was frowned upon by the lads, and worst of all, sniggered at by the girls.*'

Hawkes and Egan (2008) traced the history of childhood sexualisation, focusing on campaigns around '*child purity*' in the late 19th century and the child-rearing manuals of the 1930s and 1940s. They argue that there are considerable continuities between these campaigns and contemporary concerns about sexualisation. The phenomenon of children dressing up as sexual adults has indeed a long history. Child beauty pageants have been a feature of the US context since the 1920s. 'Baby Burlesk' films (Vickers, 2008) made in the 1930s in Hollywood starred toddlers recruited from a dance school, who were dressed in diapers with adult clothing on top and sent on modelling assignments when not filming. Ryan (2002) studied the sexualisation discourses on female emigration from Ireland in the 1930s. In the Irish context, the history of sex education discourse can also be read as part of the history of child sexualisation. As late as the 1970s, the American anthropologist Scheper-Hughes's (2002) ethnographic study of a rural village in the south of Ireland found strong parental resistance to sex education for their adolescent children because it was believed that frank discussion might awaken dormant sexual appetites.

Contemporary research on parents' attitudes to the commercialisation and sexualisation of children also reveals that parents' understandings and negotiations are in part informed by their own experiences of growing up in a commercialised and sexualised environment. They also report buying for their children what they so strongly desired in their own childhood but never had (Evans and Chandler, 2006). Parents also recall what they did to their own clothes when young to increase their sexual signification (Bragg *et al*, 2011). Such findings reveal that trends and concerns about sexualisation and commercialisation are not necessarily new phenomena or phenomena only experienced by this generation.

Intensification in recent decades

While accepting that the commercialisation and sexualisation of children is not entirely a new phenomenon, acknowledgement of an intensification or a change in the commercialisation and sexualisation of culture in the last decade is something that finds much agreement in academic, political and popular circles (Attwood, 2006; Buckingham, 2011; Renold and Ringrose, 2011). For example, Attwood (2006, pp. 78-79) described '*sexualized culture*' as a clumsy phrase, but one that captures a number of distinctive features of the contemporary society we have become familiar with in recent times, such as the '*preoccupation with sexual values, practices and identities; the public shift to more permissive sexual attitudes … the apparent breakdown of rules, categories and regulations designed to keep the obscene at bay; our fondness for scandals, controversies and panics around sex and so on*'.

Renold and Ringrose (2011) suggested we were seeing the intensification of what Rosi Braidotti (2006) called the '*global incorporation of otherness*', when sexiness and innocence come together in a 'schizoid' formation, as exemplified in the babygrow/sleepsuit displaying an erotic/sexual message, or the item of clothing that is both sexual and 'child-like', or the transmutation of Playboy into the child's world of consumption and play in the form of merchandise sold to young girls emblazoned with Playboy 'bunnies'. Sonia Livingstone, Director of the EU Kids Online network, highlighted in a blog the challenges presented by '*the easy availability of pornography, including hard-core pornography that isn't behind a pay*

wall or otherwise restricted to over 18s'. She argued that this *'marks a real change in the risks faced by children who now nearly all use the Internet, most of them daily, mostly away from the scrutiny of parents or teachers'* (Livingstone *et al*, 2012).

Children as consumers/advertisements

The increased commercialisation of western societies is usually traced back to the 1950s (Trentmann, 2009), which also saw the emergence of youth culture and subcultures as well as the popular recognition of 'the teenager' (Abrams, 1959). However, what some commentators argue is that today children are viewed as a much more viable market than in times past, thus resulting in much more advertising directly targeted at them (McNeal, 1987; Brusdal and Lavik, 2008). McNeal (1987) and Sharma (2011) explain how children are three markets in one: the present market for their current product requirements, the future market for all goods and the influential market which influences their parents' purchases. Honeyman (2010, p. 257) has written that we are experiencing a '*kid-centric advertising*' boom and how the combined use of credit cards coupled with the Internet have '*loosened practical controls on child spending*'.

According to Buckingham (2009), heightened concerns in recent times about increased commercialisation and its impact on children have to be seen in the context of wider social and family changes, the growth of a consumer society and technological advancements. For example, he notes that families are smaller in recent decades and that the allocation of space and its use (e.g. child's bedroom) within the family home has changed. Family time and activity tend to be increasingly commodified. Furthermore, negotiation and setting boundaries (rather than the strict imposition of parental authority) are also stronger features of contemporary parenting styles. Indeed, Buckingham argues that advanced capitalism and mass production, technological developments, globalisation, mobility, mass communications and free market economic policies are all part of the broader landscape of the commercialisation of childhood.

The increased appeal of the child segment of the consumer market to advertisers and commercial interests has been widely noted in the international literature on this issue (Kenway and Bullen, 2001; Bartlett, 2008; Calvert, 2008; Bragg and Buckingham, 2009; Honeyman, 2010; Sharma, 2011). Tweens (typically 9-14 year-olds) and teens are particularly targeted in a child and youth market, which is increasingly segmented, because they are perceived to have high brand awareness relative to other age groups and because they are at, or approaching, that stage of their development when they are forming their own identities. Yet, the ancillary merchandise associated with children's television characters or spokes-characters increasingly demonstrates how the advertising is directed at pre-schoolers, as do studies of pre-schoolers' brand recognition in the Netherlands and the USA (Valkenburg and Buijzen, 2005; Kinsky and Bichard, 2011). The tendency to concentrate on older children in research has prompted the argument that it is also important to include very young children as research subjects (Martens *et al*, 2004) and to investigate how children's consumer behaviour develops during early childhood (Lundby, 2011). While the segmentation of the market in terms of gender and age is noted, the subdivision and creation of further niche markets within these segmented markets is also of relevance.

What is also significant in a contemporary context is that the opportunities for advertisers to directly reach children of all ages have multiplied. When Phillip Adams (2003, p. 15) coined the provocative expression '*corporate paedophilia*' (the term later chosen as the title for Rush and La Nauze's (2006a) report for the Australian Institute), he explained that he was talking about '*the billions of dollars of marketing aimed at kids whose childhoods are being cynically abbreviated, stolen for profit*'. The commercial grooming of children facilitated by digital technology, where possibilities for interaction with branded goods are considerable, is captured by commentators. Carey (2011), for example, observes that children as young as 18 months are influenced by marketing as they develop the ability to recognise logos and match them to products. She is convinced that this trend – partly due to the impressionable

personality of young consumers who are faced with an overwhelming amount of marketing directed at them from a range of different sites – then persists over the course of a young person's development and that it is 'no coincidence that at the same time as our daughters are learning not to like what they see in the mirror, they are also becoming obsessed by consumer brand names' (*ibid*, p. 121). Calvert (2008, p. 205) also highlights the 'stealth techniques of marketing strategies' and argues that they 'make children younger than eight especially vulnerable because they lack the cognitive skills to understand the persuasive intent of television and online advertisements'.

While there is a tendency in popular circles, particularly in the media, to focus on what may be perceived to be the more spectacular, distasteful or immoral modes of consumption or products directed at children, it is rather that commercialisation and sexualisation represent the 'wallpaper' of children's lives in a contemporary context which is defined as the key concern in some sources (Bailey, 2011; Marvin, 2012). Digital interactive technologies have simultaneously opened new routes to narrow cast to children (e.g. Nikelodeon and Cartoon Network), thereby creating a growing media space just for children and children's products (Calvert, 2008). Movies targeted at a child audience can include many brand references. For example, *Wreck-it Ralph*, a film that was on general release in Ireland in 2012, featured the following brands (as counted by www.brandchannel.com): Laffy Taffy, Mentos, Nesquik, Nintendo, Oreo, Qbert, Sonic the Hedgehog and Subway. Tailor-made magazines for very young children available for retail and forms of fan culture, such as collecting, are also commercially instigated and cultivated (Buckingham, 2009). A huge range of licensed characters or TV heroes (e.g. Mickey Mouse, Peppa Pig) are used to better market to children a wide range of merchandise, including foods, toys and stationery.

Another contemporary development worth noting is how brands and logos are on public display (e.g. on clothing), thus facilitating their use as social signifiers to make claims about one's own identity and to make judgements about others (Phoenix, 2009). While children and young people have been shown to have very varying, diverse and at times resistant relationships with brands, the fact that some children use brands and logos as markers of identity (to define group insiders and outsiders, and to establish status hierarchies through consumption) has also been highlighted in the literature (Kenway and Bullen, 2001).

Internet/commercialised online activity

In addition to these traditional forms of media, new media are recognised as presenting considerable opportunities for marketing goods to children. Apart from pop-up and scrolling advertisements on websites, there are company websites selling products that also offer children games and other kinds of entertainment, as well as opportunities for constructing wish lists. For example, on the website www.Bratz.com, opportunities are offered to children to purchase subscriptions, order products, play games, test games or other website activities, join a fan club, enter sweepstakes, contests or promotions, request newsletters, updates and promotional information or materials. These different kinds of website activities collect different types of personal information. On this site, opportunities are provided to read the biographies of the different dolls for sale: Cloe describes her perfect day as '*hanging with my girls at the mall for lunch, then going on a crazy shopping spree*', while Jane's involves '*getting a mani and pedi with my girls, seeing a cool foreign movie at the independent theatre, then grabbing dinner at the fave sushi spot*'.

Clarke and Svanaes (2012) note that other websites aimed at children feature 'advertorials' (where the advertising is in the form of editorial content, giving it a credibility) or 'advergames' (where the brand is incorporated into the game), the latter being considered a particularly popular, cost-effective and successful advertising strategy with children (*for further details, see* AEF, 2012, pp. 31-32). Accidental or intentional peer-to-peer marketing can occur when a child 'likes' a company via Facebook, which results in a notification to their friends' newsfeeds.

Children can also be encouraged to spend money 'buying skins' (different looks for computer programme interfaces) to decorate their websites (Ringrose, 2010) and as highlighted by Phoenix (2011), 'freemium' games (which are free to download, but contain premium items that can lead children to spend significant amounts of money without their parents knowing) are also a major source of Internet revenue. Some of these latter marketing strategies are frequently highlighted as deceptive examples of online marketing to children because, it is argued, discerning the advertising from the content is difficult (for adults, let alone children) and they tend not to have enough suitable alerts to warn children that they are being targeted or that they are being constructed as partners in marketing (Williams, 2006). Strong correlations have been made between HFSS foods (high-fat, salt and sugar) in particular and 'advergames' as companies increasingly incorporate such 'games' into their marketing strategies.

In terms of online activity, Internet usage among teenagers, but particularly among younger children, has grown substantially since the mid-2000s (Davidson and Martellozzo, 2013). So too has Internet usage become much more of a home-based activity, rather than a school-based one, in recent years, as argued by Livingstone and Haddon (2009). Social networking sites such as Facebook, for example, have also radically altered peer-to-peer communication, while mobile devices, now widely used by children and young people in industrialised countries, present considerable opportunity for individualised and unsupervised access to media (Davidson and Martellozzo, 2013).

As Boyd and Marwick (2009) note, technology modifies age-old issues in new ways and with the advances in technology, risky behaviours or activities have become much more conspicuous. For example, the role played by new technologies features significantly in contemporary discussion and debate about pornography. Children's access and exposure to pornography, both offline and online, has generated concern. The notion that free pornography is available one or two mouse clicks away (Cadwalladr, 2013), the lack of age-related barriers to pornographic content online and the lack of warnings about adult content – all are issues identified in the literature (Flood, 2007). The marketing of pornography (particularly online, where free 'taster' material is on offer, unsolicited pop-up advertisements and e-mails) has generated unease that maybe the technology is outpacing regulation in this area.

Age restrictions to social networking sites (such as Facebook, Instagram and Tumblr) are evaded by under-18-year-olds by lying about their ages and with parents being complicit in this where they are also targeted for advertising. Indeed, Facebook has generated a degree of controversy because, it is argued, some of the content posted objectifies and degrades women, makes light of violence against women and propagates rape culture (*Huffington Post*, 2013). What young people post on Facebook and other sites, and in more recent times their use of messaging apps (e.g. WhatsApp and Snapchat), can also generate concern; a recent example of this was Necknominate on Facebook, which involved a pressurised and dangerous drinking game. Issues relating to privacy and consent are raised by cookies and web beacons/bugs (which are used to better tailor advertising), as well as the practice of certain companies that involves collecting data to sell on to others (Phoenix, 2011).

Schools as sites of commercialisation

Another issue of concern is the conceptualisation of so many diverse sites as sites of capitalist consumption. Integrated marketing strategies involve promotional activities across a wide range of media platforms (Buckingham, 2009 and 2011) and schools, according to Kenway and Bullen (2001, p. 90), present considerable opportunities '*for promotion and profit via sponsorship, philanthropy and commercial opportunism*'. In an article that decried the role of schools in the Irish context as '*providers of cannon fodder for multinationals*', Curley (2005) explains that '*the culture of the education system is to sit and listen to the teacher, a highly influential and trusted person*'. As such, promotional campaigns that are rolled out in the classroom via campaigns such as the Tesco's 'Computers for Schools', the Domestos 'Germ

Catcher Campaign' and the Independent Newspapers 'Building for the Future Campaign', reveal the extent to which markets have seeped into school communities, promoting market values and utilising children to influence consumption practices (Curley, 2005). Children are arguably pitted against one another by such competitions in terms of the individual contributions they make towards their class goal of collecting enough coupons or tokens to attain whatever reward is on offer. Buckingham (2011) has drawn attention to the contradictions, as well as the success (Walkers' 'Books for School Campaign 1999-2003') or otherwise (Cadbury's 'Get Active Campaign'), of these promotional schemes. A 'Campaign for Commercial-Free Education' (www.commercialfreeeducation.com) was initiated in Ireland in 2005 by teachers, parents and concerned individuals, with the aim of promoting and supporting commercial-free schools throughout the country. The campaign has highlighted as important issues to be addressed the underfunding of schools, the contradictory stance taken by governments on school commercialism and the lack of any kind of regulation or standard policy on the increasing advertising and sale of commercial products in Irish schools.

Commercialised leisure activities

It must also be noted that as children have limited access to public spaces, commercial spaces are more likely to feature in the spaces they occupy for leisure purposes, and as a result, they are sure to come across more marketing material and sexualised goods, including ones not specifically targeted at their age group. In the Irish context, libraries, multiplex cinemas, fast food outlets and restaurants, and even play areas, are often located in shopping centres, indicating that children are also accustomed to using such locations for leisure pursuits other than shopping. At the same time as the lack of State-provided public play provision was coming in for criticism (Webb and Associates, 1999), commercial play complexes were mushrooming and increasing their provision to cater for a diverse age range of children. One such facility in a city suburb provides for parent and toddler mornings, LA pampered princess parties and summer camps; it has a play area, laser tag, astro turf pitches, indoor soccer, PlayStation/Xbox, pool tables, table soccer, a dance studio available for rental, and go-karts. Birthday parties are as often held in commercial leisure complexes and fast food restaurants as in private houses. There exists quite a degree of evidence in the Irish context that children and young people's access to and use of commercial spaces for recreational purposes has increased in recent years and this kind of recreational activity is oftentimes favoured by parents, who fear the risks associated with children's unstructured, unsupervised activity in public spaces. However, this is also not to suggest that public spaces are commercial-free spaces, since they are also sites used for advertising purposes (e.g. billboards).

2.4   Children and commercialisation

Effects on children

It is important to point out that research on the negative effects of commercialisation and sexualisation on children is dominated by what is known as the 'production of consumption' approach.[2] However, rather than pinpointing any definitive effects, studies conducted have tended to find associations, patterns or correlations between certain problems and the processes of sexualisation and commercialisation (Buckingham, 2011). Commentators' perspectives are varied: some argue that consumption acts can be empowering for children and young people, while others take the view that consumption can amount to a corruption of childhood by burdening children with spending-related decision-making and enticing them into capitalist economies before they fully understand their implications. This divergence of

---

[2]   The media-effects research can be traced back to the 1970s, according to Buckingham (2011). More recent examples of this kind of research have been undertaken by Dutch researchers at the Amsterdam School of Communication Research in Amsterdam University and some of this work is profiled in this review (Opree *et al*, 2012; Valkenburg and Peter, 2013).

perspectives is well summed up in Buckingham's (2009, p. 3) report, commissioned by the UK's Department for Children, Schools and Families: 'The commercial world offers children important opportunities in terms of entertainment, learning, creativity and cultural experience. But there are also significant concerns about what many see as harmful impacts on children's well-being, especially on their mental and physical health.'

The negative impacts of commercialisation on children and young people, apart from the concerns related to sexualisation in marketing, have also been documented. In the UK, the Compass Report on the *Commercialisation of Childhood* (Williams, 2006) identified psychological problems, the requirement to grow up too soon, the stifling of children's development, interference in their education, poor health and family conflict as the negative impacts of a commercial culture on children. Goldberg *et al* (2003), in their survey of US children aged 9-14 years ('tweens') and materialism, established a link between those who were considered to be preoccupied with materialism and a decrease in their performance and interest at school. The UK's National Consumer Council found that children who spent a lot of time watching TV, playing on the computer and engaging with advertisements were more materialistic than children who engaged in other activities (Nairn and Omrod, 2007). The UK's Family and Parenting Institute (2011) also drew attention to the correlations between materialism and school, particularly in areas of relative deprivation, and suggested that 'materialistic' children were at risk of doing less well at school and were also less likely to help with housework. Similarly, Brusdal and Lavik (2008), in their study of Norwegian school children (aged 12-19 years), found that the more money young people spent on clothes, the more peer oriented and less family oriented they were; also, being more strongly peer oriented correlated with poor school performance. Estimates made as a result of research conducted in the USA and the UK suggested that between 12% and 44% of young people in these countries experience compulsive buying as a dysfunctional behaviour (Magee, 1994; Hassay and Smith, 1996; Dittmar, 2005). Furthermore, in other studies, adolescents featured among the highest segment of the group of people who use consumer goods to mediate mood and to seek identity creation, and who may be disappointed at the outcome (Gardarsdotir *et al*, 2005; Kasser and Kanner, 2004). Compulsive buying has been identified as a significant strategy used by adolescents in the USA to cope with academic stress (Robert and Roberts, 2012).

Calvert (2008, p. 218) warned that '*exposing children to commercial messages can lead to negative outcomes, including parent-child conflict, cynicism, obesity, and possibly materialistic attitudes*'. Indeed, Opree *et al* (2012), in their longitudinal survey-based study of children in the age range 8-11 years in the Netherlands, found that lower life satisfaction leads to materialism among the children affected, who also experienced frequent exposure to television advertising. The authors argue that the findings indicate that unhappy children saw materialism as a route to happiness, which was negatively impacting on their well-being and required intervention. The same set of survey data was also used to demonstrate that advertising exposure had a positive longitudinal effect on materialism, as evidenced by children's increased desire for advertised rather than general products.

Sweeting *et al* (2012, p. 817) asserted that '*material goods do not contribute directly to young people's happiness*'. Their study, which examined data from secondary school pupils to explore the associations between consumerism and well-being, corroborated what previous research had shown, that '*there was no evidence from this sample of Western early adolescents that large numbers of modern consumer goods increased well-being*'.

How 'wellbeing' is understood is significant, however, since it tends to be conceptualised in very broad terms. Buckingham's (2009, p. 5) report on *The Impact of the Commercial World on Children's Wellbeing* offered a definition of the concept, including '*physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing; protection from harm and neglect; education, training and recreation; the contribution made by children and young people to society; and social and economic wellbeing*'. Although some published research establishes associations between aspects of the commercial world and the negative well-being of children, few studies have been

conducted on the importance of commercial factors in comparison to other influences, such as peers and parents. Buckingham (2009) claims that the commercial world may also have positive effects on children which are not the focus of research; however, with only limited reliable evidence available on the specific impacts, this view may not be widely recognised. Therefore, the failure to take account of the full range of influences and how they interact with each other in children's lives, as documented by Buckingham (2009), raises questions for him and others as to the strength of the existing evidence base underpinning the case for more negative regulation in this sphere (Buckingham, 2009 and 2011; Bragg *et al*, 2011; Kearney, 2011). Buckingham (2009) also argues that establishing definitive proof on the impact of the commercial world on children would be difficult, and maybe impossible, to find. This, however, has led organisations campaigning for more restraint in commercial practices as they are directed at children to argue that a '*precautionary principle*' (Rush, 2009) in relation to children might be justified. However, as pointed out by Buckingham (2009), the precautionary principle can have counterproductive consequences, since in seeking to prevent harm by extending regulatory mechanisms, we also run the risk of restricting positive opportunities for learning and socialisation. An example of this might be that an action taken, such as banning the advertising of high-fat, sugary or salty foods on children's TV, can result in lower revenue for the TV stations, which in turn decreases their ability to develop good-quality programming for children, which impacts their potential to learn.

Byron (2008), in her report on *Safer Children in a Digital World*, also took cognisance of the problems she identified with the 'effects' research agenda in the fields of Internet safety and gaming. She noted that the findings were not always that useful for policy-making, that technology change is rapid and presents challenges for research, and that much of the 'effects' research is undertaken in the USA, which is a different cultural context to that of the UK (where she was undertaking her review). She argued the case for moving away from a discussion of the Internet and video gaming causing harm to children towards a discussion of what children bring to technology, and to use our understanding of how they develop to manage risks and to make the digital world safer. Livingstone and Helsper (2004) also bemoaned the research literature's fixation on an ideal experiment to provide definitive proof of advertising's negative effects on children, in isolation from all other factors. Sociologists Martens, Southerton and Scott (2004) have also criticised the 'effects' research for characterising the relationship between production and consumption simply as if production stipulated or determined consumer behaviour. Valkenburg and Peter (2013) claimed that the small effects sizes found in media-effects research defied common sense and drew attention to five key challenges[3] that need to be surmounted if media-effects research is to enhance its explanatory power in society.

In sum, at this point it is important to reiterate the lack of evidence as to (1) the direct effects of commercialisation on children; (2) the tendency of some research to present correlations or associations between variables in a cause-effect manner; and (3) to highlight our lack of knowledge as to the directions of the correlations found in the 'effects' studies.

Consumer socialisation

As documented by McNeal (1987), after World War II parents started to see their children as consumers and they played a part in their children's socialisation as consumers. The process of consumer socialisation can be seen to offer important developmental opportunities to children. Considering the term, Buckingham (2011, p. 52) suggests that, basically, it is '*a question of how children learn to think and behave according to dominant social expectations, and thereby become competent members of society*'. In relation to consumption, socialisation is

---

[3]   These five challenges were: 1. Improved media exposure methods; 2. More programmatic research on conditional media effects; 3. More targeted cumulative theory testing; 4. Broader recognition of transactional media effects; and 5. A reconsideration of the media effects paradigm in the context of new media (*see* Valkenburg and Peter (2013) for more extensive discussion).

therefore about learning to be an effective consumer. Identifying the age range of 7-11 years as a very important phase in the development of consumer socialisation, Buckingham attributes the status of 'founding statement' in this area of research to the work of Scott Ward (1974), who offers the following definition of consumer socialisation: '*The processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the market place*'. (Ward, 1974, cited in Buckingham, 2011, p. 52).

Such a definition suggests that consumer activity is inevitable and socialisation into it can be a positive and empowering experience. Ward (1974) considered the important role of the family in this socialisation process and Farrell and Shields (2007, p. 465) discussed '*the intergenerational transfer of tastes and preferences, which occurs as children mimic their parents' expenditure behaviour*'. Similarly, in an Australian survey of parenting children under eight years of age in the digital age, the results showed how parents set the tone and played the crucial role in creating the family media ecology that persists over time (Wartella *et al*, 2013). Farrell and Shields (2007, p. 465) also note how intergenerational patterns have '*important policy-related implications*' because government action aimed at discouraging certain types of consumption patterns in the adult population (e.g. bad diet, alcohol, smoking and gambling) may have an indirect, beneficial, long-term impact on future generations' consumption behaviour.

Negotiating consumption from diverse social positionings

Considering that children and young people have, relative to adults, much less access to any real economic and political power, the creation of status hierarchies based on consumption provides a means for them to use whatever power they can utilise (Milner, 2004). West *et al* (2006) identify a '*material paradox*' in their longitudinal study of Scottish youth surveyed three times between the ages of 11 and 15 years. This refers to the finding that the most disadvantaged young people had greater purchasing power than their better-off counterparts to buy into consumer culture, despite both groups of young people sharing similarly strong consumerist values and desires. The authors attributed this to class-based parental values and money practices, parental sacrifice of their own needs for those of their children, 'pester power' and disadvantaged young people's higher levels of personal income and purchasing power. The authors highlighted the importance of class-based values in facilitating and inhibiting young people's involvement in consumer culture.

A quantitative comparative study of high- and low-income teenagers, undertaken by Isaksen and Roper (2008), found that low-income teenagers were less clear in their self-concept and more susceptible to interpersonal influence than their more affluent counterparts. In a study of sports shoes or trainers worn by less affluent children in the UK (Elliott and Leonard, 2004), the children disclosed being bullied by their peers for wearing the 'wrong' brands, and buying the 'right' trainers was a strategy adopted to prevent this and to conceal the economic realities of their home environment. Similarly, several studies report parents' efforts to deny themselves in order to provide children with the kind of clothing or items that will give them status among their peers, and to detract from the stigma of their poverty (Croghan *et al*, 2006; Gordon *et al*, 2006; Middleton *et al*, 1998).

To a much greater extent than their less affluent counterparts, middle-class parents can determine through their consumption the contexts in which their children live their lives (e.g. neighbourhoods, schools, holidays, out-of-school activities, childcare). Better-off parents are in a position to readily convert their economic capital into cultural capital to fund the commercially provided activities that help secure their children's futures, but which rarely generate negative attention. However, in other contexts and indeed in Ireland, it is the consumption of poor or more marginalised families that is most often pathologised as 'tasteless' or 'excessive'. According to Seiter (1993), the desire to shelter children from consumption is a predominantly middle-class one, fuelling its own specialised or niche markets in 'quality' toys and 'good' educational products and services.

Studies indicate how commercial influences, combined with social meaning, play out very differently across social classes. Affluent parents in Pugh's (2009) much-cited study in the USA were more ambivalent about children's involvement in consumer culture, did more to restrain their desires, avoid conspicuous consumption, and tended to be disdainful of commercial values generally. In contrast, poorer parents expressed much less ambivalence, were much more sensitive to how their children might feel in their peer group if they did not have certain things and were also very keen to use commodities to conceal their low income.

Parents' reflexivity of their own childhoods, it is argued, is also highly instructive in terms of how it illuminates their anticipations and anxieties for their children and their own parenting practices around their children's consumption (Martens et al, 2004). As Buckingham (2011) argues, parents' accessions to their children's requests cannot be read simply as parents' inability to withstand the lure of the market or their children pestering for products; rather, it is tied in with their own emotions of delight and anxiety, with memories and fantasies of their own and their children's childhoods, and with their concerns for their children's social positioning among their peers and the social status of the family. Parents choosing to resist their children's appeals can be said to be equally as complicated to read.

Along similar lines to Skeggs (1997) who has focused on the persistent media pathologisation of the working-class female body as marked by sexual excess, Renold and Ringrose (2011), among others (e.g. Egan, 2013), have argued that the media-fuelled sexualisation 'public panic' in the UK, Australia and the USA is a white middle-class one, which thrives on theories of the over-sexualised and/or inappropriately sexualised working-class girl, who is pitted against the middle-class norm of developmentally appropriate (hetero)sexuality. In other work, the significant barriers encountered by young people with disabilities to participating in cultures of consumption (which their peers take for granted) have been noted (Hughes et al, 2005), highlighting how such cultures are possibly not so democratic as we might assume, but rather constituted in ways that exclude groups of young people from participating.

Other studies have drawn attention to the ongoing privileging of 'whiteness' or idealised body imagery within the media and popular forms of cultural consumption (Fraser and Taylor, 2011; Valdivia, 2011). Research conducted for Credos, the UK advertising think tank, revealed that girls aged 10-21 years were in favour of much greater diversity in advertising to include a range of sizes, shapes and skin tones (Fraser and Taylor, 2011); as high as 84% of those surveyed considered airbrushing of images of models to change body shape 'unacceptable' and 61% were against the use of cosmetic airbrushing in advertising. Children and young people do re-inscribe popular media to make a space for themselves within it (e.g. Lipton's 2008 study of queer youth) or they personalise products (e.g. Chin's 1999 study in which African-American girls worked on Barbie dolls' hair to make it more like their own), thus making consumption and consumer products work for them. Proposing further research on the topic of children, young people and pornography, the recent rapid evidence assessment by Horvath et al (2013) underlined the need to ensure that there is much greater diversity in terms of colour, ethnicity, ability and sexual orientation in the young people studied in future. Indeed, such findings validate a call to researchers, policy-makers, campaigners and commentators to try to understand young people's negotiations of consumption in all their complexity and from multiple social positions.

Children and young people's active engagement with the commercial world

Findings presented in this section indicate an active and varied engagement by children with the branding of goods and advertising strategies targeting them. They make a strong case for approaches in cultural studies that shed light on children and young people's reception, use and production of mediated consumption practices.

It is worth noting that the idea of children as 'passive' in the consumption trajectory, and as being involved in the latent reception of trend and brand-driven communication, does not account for the agency of children, as highlighted by a number of researchers (Pomerantz, 2008; Ging, 2009; Buckingham *et al*, 2010; Vares and Jackson, 2010; Pilcher, 2010; Bragg *et al*, 2011). For example, Pilcher's (2010) analysis of the consumption of branded clothing by children aged 12 years and under in England revealed that in a context of parental influence and intergenerational negotiations, children of this age reflexively used their knowledge and appraisal of clothing retailers, brands and their own fashion preferences to achieve their identities and to construct their relations with their peers.

The study by Bragg *et al* (2011) revealed that young participants, particularly girls, engaged in ongoing self-scrutiny when negotiating 'sexualised' consumption to ensure that they fit in with their chosen peers and not those whom they perceived as 'other' and from whom they sought to distance themselves. Willett's (2008) study of girls' use of online doll-maker websites as a route to exploring their perceptions of body image found that while the girls' modes of expression were certainly regulated by external forces, neither were the girls dupes of consumer culture. Elm (2009) also highlighted the active strategies engaged by young girls in their online sexualised presentations of self, which they steered between sexual attractiveness and sexual modesty. A collection of essays edited by Kearney (2011) also captured the agency and confidence of girls using media technologies and producing their own media; however, the authors also alert readers to the regressive and oppressive discourses and values that can be reproduced by girls in their own cultural practices (Banet-Weiser, 2011; Kearney, 2011).

Marketers are also aware that children are not one large homogeneous group and so, through further segmentation of the child market, they seek to target subgroups more effectively (Dotson and Hyatt, 2005). Tweens (i.e. children in age range 9-14 years), even more than teens, represent one of marketing's '*newest consumer personas*' (Cody, 2012). As Simpson *et al* (1998) found, tweens were more status conscious than teens in picking clothes that had the attributes of style, brand name and the latest fashions. However, Cody (2012), based on her year-long study of 15 Irish female tweens (aged 11-12 years), revealed the existence of a target market that did not comply with the tenets of segment homogeneity and uniform responses to marketing activity. An important observation made by Beasley (2008) is that contradictory evidence can be overlooked: for example, among young people, clothing in fashion considered to signify sexualisation (e.g. thong underwear and low-cut jeans) is often paralleled at the same time by clothing that is also fashionable but does not 'sexualise' or emphasise the 'female form' (e.g. oversized jeans and T-shirts). Given the concern generated about increased exposure to commercial and sexualised material in a range of traditional (but also new) media, it is important to point out that consumers are also likely to be 'editors' of information and they use technology to avoid advertisements that do not interest them or that they find distracting or excessive. In this context, significant findings emerged from the small exploratory qualitative study by Kelly *et al* (2010) on advertising avoidance among young Australians (aged 13-17 years) engaged in social networking. The study found that respondents took little interest in the advertising on websites; that many of the advertisements were not relevant to them, that interactive games were played, but personal information was not disclosed; and that the advertisements were not viewed by respondents as advertising. The study also found that advertising recall was minimal and that there was scepticism about social networking sites as a credible advertising medium. The authors argued that these findings could be used as the starting point towards understanding why advertising in the online social networking environment has not been as successful as originally anticipated (Kelly *et al*, 2010).

Similarly, in the Irish context, a survey of teenagers by a Dublin-based digital consultancy firm found that teenagers turning a blind eye to advertising was consistent across all media types: websites, apps, print and TV (O'Connor, 2013). Video advertising on YouTube was highlighted by those surveyed as particularly annoying. However, interactive advertising such as SMS competitions and viral videos were reported by teenagers as more effective than other forms of advertising in terms of engaging their interest. They also acknowledged the effectiveness of product placement and brands made 'cool' by association with celebrities.

Protection or empowerment?

In response to what Buckingham (2009) calls '*the emotional appeals and devious machinations of marketers*', a protectionist approach is frequently proffered. In the USA, the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (2009) argues that '*we see too many examples of commercial interests that cynically exploit the uncertainty children and adolescents feel about their identity and self-esteem*'. Honeyman (2010) explains how, in the early 19th century, a protectionist attitude emerged towards children and young people. She goes on to present the inherent contradiction involved with such protectionism, when it emphasises children's inability to resist marketing appeals or products without putting sufficient focus on exploitative and unethical marketing practices. It is this approach that has led to the scenario whereby '*since the 1980s, businesses have exploited child powerlessness with claims of empowerment through consumer choice*' (*ibid*, p. 257). Acknowledging the rights of children enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including that of protection, it would appear that ongoing responses to this predicament lie in different combinations of approaches designed to protect and empower. Garde's (2011) work on the protection of children-consumers in the EU challenges children's rights organisations to take on this agenda as an important part of their remit.

It would appear that neither protection nor empowerment is appropriate by itself, given that the evidence, both of risk and harm caused by the commercial world and of its benefits, is not easily untangled, and is rarely conclusive. Overall, it suggests that children are neither the helpless victims imagined by some campaigners nor the autonomous 'savvy' consumers celebrated by some marketing people (Buckingham, 2009).

2.5   Children and sexualisation

Effects on children

The issue of sexualisation is one that has achieved due critical attention, both in academic circles and in popular discourse, as well as informing policy formation internationally. In contrast to potential positive effects, the perceived negative impacts of sexualisation are more widely assumed, researched and discussed. Common among the research on the effects of sexualisation is a view expressed by Gale (2011, p. 21), that sexualisation '*has been linked to an increase in anxiety, depression, eating disorders, body image issues, lower academic performance, and sexual activity at earlier ages*'. Although it is acknowledged that research around this topic is scarce, researchers make links between young people accessing Internet pornography and the subsequent development of unhealthy attitudes towards sex. One study cited is that by Peter and Valkenburg (2006), which involved an online survey among 745 Dutch adolescents, aged 13-18 years, conducted in 2005. The study found that the more often pornography was sought online, the more likely a young person would be to develop a recreational stance towards sexual activities, viewing them as physical functions in much the same way as eating or drinking. The researchers also suggest a relationship between the use of pornography and the feeling that affection for people is not necessary in order to have sex with them. In another publication based on the same Dutch research, Peter and Valkenburg (2007) found a link between the type and explicitness of sexual media that teens saw and their tendency to view women as sexual 'playthings'.

In Flood's (2009) review of the harms of pornography exposure among children and young people, he established associations between exposure to sexualised media and greater acceptance of stereotyped and sexist notions about gender and sexual roles, including ideas of women as sex objects. Research by Hennessey *et al* (2009) in the USA investigated associations between adolescents' sexual behaviour and exposure to the content of a number of different types of sexual media (including television, music, magazines and video games) over time. The study involved a three-wave, longitudinal survey sample (N=506) of 14-16 year-olds and the analysis used growth curves. Similar to Brown *et al*'s earlier research in 2006, the 2009

study findings show that media exposure and 'effects' are not uniform, but vary by age, gender and ethnicity; the authors also acknowledged that causal direction in this area of research is inherently ambiguous. There does exist, however, a body of evidence indicating a causal relationship between young people's sexual behaviour and their level of exposure to sexual content across several types of media (Brown and Newcomer, 1991; Collins *et al*, 2004; Brown *et al*, 2006; Hennessy *et al*, 2009), although it is acknowledged that this relationship is very complicated, requires more extensive research and is not uniform for different groups of young people (e.g. white and black adolescents) (Brown *et al*, 2006; Hennessy *et al*, 2009).

Complicating issues pertaining to risk of harm from pornography is the view that not all pornography is violent and patriarchal (Attwood and Smith, 2011) and that there may be positive outcomes for children in terms of building their resilience and giving them the opportunity to explore their sexualities away from an often-times disapproving adult gaze (Livingstone, 2012). A rapid evidence assessment conducted in the UK concluded that no inference of causality could be made in relation to the effects on children and young people of access and exposure to pornography (Horvath *et al*, 2013). It reiterated the links that have been found in various research studies between violent attitudes and violent media, and between access and exposure to pornography and engagement in risky behaviour. It suggested that if there is no evidence providing insight into causality, it might be time to ask different questions when studying pornography. McKee (2013), in a blog, also rejected claims made in the sexualisation discourses, that pornography was responsible for deteriorating relationships between the genders, arguing that the days before Internet porn were not 'the good old days', but rather that relationships between young men and young women have improved immeasurably since then.

Sources on sexualisation have tended to rely heavily on the *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls* (APA, 2007), which reviewed empirical evidence for the damage resulting from sexual objectification (identified as a consequence or indicator of media-based sexualisation in the report) in terms of its impact on various domains of female functioning (Hatch, 2011). However, it has to be noted that the evidence reviewed originated from research conducted (as is the case with most of the research around sexualisation) predominantly with adolescent, college student or adult populations, due to the dearth of studies on a younger population, and for ethical and other reasons (APA, 2007; Buckingham *et al*, 2011; Hatch, 2011). One ethical issue relates to the fear about the potential damage induced by question-behaviour effects[4] in research focused on undesirable behaviours involving minors (Peter and Valkenburg, 2012).

The following is a summary of the nine areas of female functioning identified in the APA Task Force's 2007 report as being negatively impacted by sexual objectification:

1. Disrupted attention to tasks and learning among young women, predominantly African-American, Latina and Asian-American young women (Hebl *et al*, 2004). Studies revealed that when chronic attention was being devoted to physical appearance, fewer cognitive resources were devoted to other mental and physical activities (e.g. Fredrickson *et al*, 1998).
2. Limits on the forms and effectiveness of girls' physical movements (e.g. Fredrickson and Harrison, 2005; Roberton and Halverson, 1984).
3. Increases feelings of shame about one's body (e.g. McKinley, 1999; Tiggemann and Slater, 2001).
4. Enhances appearance anxiety among females and a kind of 'chronic vigilance' of appearance (Tiggemann and Lynch, 2001).
5. Generates greater body dissatisfaction among girls and young women, as evidenced, for example, in the increase in the number of girls aged 18 and younger who got breast implants (Olding and Zuckerman, 2004).

---

4   This refers to the possibility that the asking of questions about behaviours might change the particular behaviours and in directions not desired, so that, for example, questions about intended illegal drug consumption may play a part in increasing illegal drug consumption in the immediate period that follows the question being asked.

6. Results in negative mental health outcomes (Tolman *et al*, 2006).
7. Increases eating disorders (Grabe *et al*, 2006).
8. Causes physical health effects, such as earlier onset of smoking (Stice and Shaw, 2003).
9. Results in diminished sexual health, indicated by decreased condom use, and reduced sexual assertiveness (Schooler and Tolman, 2006).

While the remit of the APA Task Force only extended to the sexualisation of girls, it did draw attention to the '*numerous studies*' (e.g. Murnen *et al*, 2002; Vogel, 2000) making connections between stereotypical attitudes about women's sexuality and males' aggressive behaviours. It also made reference to an experimental study by Paul (2004), which suggested the potential for imagery sexualising childhood (barely legal pornography – the viewing of models aged over 28 years made up to look like children) to influence adult males' perceptions relating to children in the sexual direction. In view of the dearth of research and, as a consequence, data on the impact of sexualisation on children of a younger age, one study of college-age subjects' recollections found that latency-age (age 6-12 years) exposure to sexually explicit material did predict later sexual dysfunction and online sexual behaviours (Hunt and Kraus, 2009).

Debates around sexualisation

Vanwesenbeeck (2009), a Dutch sexologist, argues that sexualisation is associated with risks as well as with rights, but that the latter tend to be ignored in such sources as the APA Task Force's 2007 report. Furthermore, she argues that media exposure is too often taken as a one-directional predictor of outcomes, without enough attention being given to how people interpret media, choose to consume it or relate it to their everyday lives. Indeed, factors such as gender, life experience and cultural background are all considered important by commentators such as Vanwesenbeeck, among others, in terms of coming to a better and more complex understanding of sexualised media interpretation and, as a consequence, its effects (Attwood, 2006 and 2009; Thompson, 2010).

Attwood (2006) called for a more considered account of how sexualisation, commodification, objectification and politics interact in order to avoid hasty adjudications that popular representations of sexuality are either objectifying or alternatively democratising. For Albury and Lumby (2010), the sexualisation discourse is an '*elastic discourse*', elastic enough to cover any kind of sexual expression and a whole set of concerns about different issues (e.g. body image, sexual violence) as effects and evidence of sexualisation. Markovic (2012, p. 106) is also critical of this conflation of issues that are assigned to sexualisation as an apparent cause: '*Eating disorders, depressions, suicide and sexual violence are blamed on it, whilst lacking systematic evidence to verify this link.*' Vanwesenbeeck (2009) iterates some sexualised media's capacity to inspire, encourage and empower consumers, a point also acknowledged by others (Coy, 2009; Lerum and Dworkin, 2009). Sharif Mowlabocus (in Attwood *et al*, 2012) has highlighted how policy and public discussions about sexualisation have thus far privileged heterosexual relations and he argues that there is a need to focus on how different young people (e.g. lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT) young people in this instance) might be using materials (e.g. pornography) for different reasons and in ways that validate their ways of being in the world, thus offering opportunities for their empowerment. Coy (2009, p. 375), for example, states that '*some, perhaps many, young women may find that a sexualised identity gives them confidence and a sense that they are able to take control of their lives by defining themselves in a way that can be socially rewarding*'. Similar to Coy in arguing that some, but not all kinds of sexualisation are objectifications, Higonnet (1998) points out that children and young people are also objectified through innocence and that this is no less insidious (Najafi, 2002/03).

In the USA, Nowatzki and Morry (2009) argued on the basis of their research with young female students that in a society where the sexual objectification of women is so prevalent, it is understandable that it can be viewed by young women as empowering. They established in their research a link between female students' 'self-sexualizing behavior' and media portrayals of women's sexual attractiveness which constituted broader socio-cultural ideals, but no link

between such 'behaviour' and sexist attitudes among young women. Gill (2003) argued that popular representations offering '*sexual subjectification*' were merely sexual objectification cunningly disguised. Similar to Gill, Coy (2009) acknowledges that opportunities for empowerment can be limited by the restricted forms of femininity offered to young women in some sexualised material, such as Bratz dolls. She recognises that the '*background noise*' of sexualisation is directed at adults, but also available to, and absorbed by, children. The impact of this is that '*the ubiquity of sexualised images of women and the meanings attributed to them paint a picture of womanhood that narrows girls' horizons whilst appearing to stretch them into limitless possibilities*' (*ibid*, p. 374). Furthermore, Coy refers to the work of Lamb and Brown (2006), who '*draw particular attention to the Disney version of girlhood based on princessdom, baring midriffs, arching backs and an obsession with mirrors, which they suggest parallels the fantasy woman of pornography*' (*ibid*, p. 375). Significantly, for Gill (2003) and Coy (2009) popular images portraying particular objectifying types of femininity are also seen as significant for producing a set of expected behaviours which become the 'norm' in cultural repertoire and which inform male understandings of women and girls, with possible implications for the performances of masculinities.

Notwithstanding these observations on the sexualisation of culture, Lerum and Dworkin (2009) also acknowledge that empowering aspects of sexualisation are used to sell products to girls in the form of what is called '*commodity feminism*'. They claim that the gains of second wave feminism have not escaped corporate recognition when a variety of products are marketed to women (e.g. Nike's 'Just Do It' marketing campaign). They, along with others (Renold and Ringrose, 2011; Jackson and Vares, 2015), question the extent to which all of the very varied sexualised imagery viewed by girls causes them to be directly influenced or to imitate hyper-sexual subjectivities or to perceive women as sexual objects rather than sexual subjects.

Accepting the importance of such enquiries into how women and girls interpret and relate to sexualised culture, Coy and Garner (2012, p. 294) caution that whilst accounting for individual actions, we should '*not lose sight of systems, the operation of gendered power and how these translate into everyday ontologies*'. They argue that much of the academic critique of policy-making reports in this area have overshadowed some important issues (e.g. violence against women) raised in these reports and have made the potential harms of sexualisation unfashionable and fearful territory for feminists. Thus, they have called for a more politicised feminist engagement with sexualised popular culture and one which in so doing also values the practice-based evidence of women's organisations.

In relation to the issue of violence against women, there are also criminologists such as Fanghanel (2013) who criticise the perpetuation of victim-blaming and rape myths generated by the kind of sexualisation discourse that implies that girls and women are at least partially, if not wholly, responsible for their own experiences of sexual assault and rape if, by their 'improper' dress, they indicate they are not caring enough for their own safety.

While Bragg *et al* (2011) observed that, in much of the public debate and research literature, there is an implication that what constitutes 'a sexualised good' is obvious, they noted the considerable challenges in defining this for the purposes of their own research, which focused on the availability of sexualised goods in Scottish shops. They drew attention to the ways in which age distinctions are both constructed (e.g. separate floors for goods targeted at children and adults) and blurred (e.g. very small adult clothing sizes) in the retail world, while in contrast gender distinctions are not only more apparent (e.g. separate shopping aisles), but also rigorously enforced (colours, slogans, fabrics and marketing techniques). A noteworthy finding from Bragg *et al*'s (2011) study was that relatively few 'sexualised' products[5] were

---

[5] 'Sexualised goods' were very broadly defined to include those in which reference was made to sexual practices through images, innuendo (e.g. blow me and an image of a fan); goods that appeared to make reference to sexual contexts through images, words (feather boa – burlesque); goods that emphasised body parts (e.g. cleavage, groin); goods that duplicated styles considered fashionable for adults (e.g. Hello Kitty 'sexy little mints'); and goods that contained reference to gender stereotypes (e.g. male dominance). For further detail, see Bragg *et al*, 2011, p. 282.

specifically aimed at children, since many shops surveyed for the purpose of the research contained no examples of such goods. Rather, what children could see all around them in shops were sexualised goods targeted at the adult market.

Studies also indicate that children sometimes do not see, as their parents do, clothes' sexual signification; rather, they want to wear them because they perceive them as 'cool' and fashionable (Buckingham and Bragg, 2005; Pilcher, 2010; Rysst, 2010) or because they see them as a way of 'ageing up' towards feminine adulthood or to announce to others that they are moving into the heterosexual marketplace (Pilcher, 2010). As highlighted by Thompson (2010), considering that children attempt to 'adult' themselves and adults attempt to 'child' children, tensions are likely to emerge. Indeed, Thompson points out that few parents are concerned when their little girls play with tea sets, push shopping trolleys or buggies, but when their dress, play or behaviour strays into the domain representing adult sexualities, possibly changing how adults may perceive children, then fear and unease is the likely result.

This challenge was also evident in the study by Bragg *et al* (2011) when the views of parents and young people were obtained. For example, the potential sexual meaning of an item of clothing could be '*temporarily eclipsed*' if it became very fashionable or, for example, the wearing of thick tights or leggings to some extent desexualised the wearing of a micro-mini skirt. The authors asked, '*Is a Playboy bunny notebook a sexualised good if its association with the sex industry is unknown?*' The study concluded that the processes of negotiating sexualised consumption were generally found to be complex for both parents and young girls for a range of reasons.

Bragg (2012) draws attention to the diversity in youth subcultural styles (emo, skater, goth, punk, geek), which are not uniformly 'sexualised'. Egan (2013) argues that the 'dystopic' vision of girlhood in contemporary culture, generated by claims made in reports on sexualisation, is not borne out by the empirical picture of girls' lives more generally. She offers a snapshot from the broad demographic patterns of girls' behaviour, achievement and well-being in the USA, the UK and Australia, and makes the point that the empirical evidence in relation to girls' conduct, lifestyles and well-being is more complicated, nuanced and constitutes a much more positively rounded picture than that conveyed in the reports on sexualisation.

Re-thinking 'innocence'

The idea of childhood as 'the seat of innocence' is historically embedded (Higonnet, 1998; Kincaid, 1998; Robinson, 2013). Robinson (2013) traces the modern historical correlation between children and innocence from the 18th century when, post-industrial revolution, children of the middle classes occupied the private sphere of the home, thus igniting an impetus of protection towards them. The writings and research findings of those who question the usefulness of the policy as it relates to issues of commercialisation, and more specifically sexualisation, are addressed in this section (i.e. (Egan and Hawkes, 2008a, 2008b and 2009; Robinson, 2009; Faulkner, 2010).

Egan and Hawkes (2008a, 2008b and 2009) are consistent in their challenge of contemporary constructions of 'childhood' and of 'innocence'. Their work investigates the implications of discourses and frameworks of protection, something which they argue forecloses the possibility of the sexual agency of children (*ibid*, 2008a). Ultimately, they advocate for a shift in the conceptualisation of both sexualisation and innocence, but warn that such a reframing will demand that we become accustomed to difficult and uncomfortable discursive repositioning. They suggest that we view sexualisation as a process rather than an unwanted outcome, and that this would require a number of conceptual shifts, the first being that '*innocence should be removed as the criterion against which a girl's relationship to sexuality gets measured*' (*ibid*, 2008b, p. 318). They argue that '*innocence requires passivity and operates as a pure point strangely connected to its opposite, depravity, or in this case, sexualisation*' (*ibid*, 2008a, p. 355). A core argument of Egan and Hawkes (2009) is that the equation of innocence with purity and sexual inactivity is a moralistic and often social class-driven enterprise, which serves to

undermine the sexual subjectivities of young women and serves to demarcate them as 'other', undermining their right to sexual agency and denigrating their reputation and, ultimately, their right to protection.

According to Robinson (2008), the notion of childhood innocence is enshrined in theories of human development, which also constitute understandings of sexuality. Thus, sexuality, according to Robinson (2008), tends to be constructed as the preserve of adults and to be understood in very limited terms as physical sexual acts and not as an integral dimension of people's socially constructed identities – and this includes children, who, Robinson reminds us, are sexual agents throughout their lives. In this context, sexualisation discourse can also be viewed as playing its part in what Robinson describes as '*the fetishisation of childhood innocence*'. In similar vein, Duschinsky (2013, pp. 151-52) argues that '*the construction of the threat posed by sexualisation is grounded in and legitimates practices that regulate the choices of young women, positioned as unable to stand as adequate cultural agents because necessarily either innocent or corrupted*'.

Writing from her clinical experience as a psychosexual psychotherapist, Markovic (2012, p. 104) relates encountering young people '*struggling with the implications of such normative prescriptions embedded in society's expectations of them, and feeling bad about themselves as a result of not fitting in to this idealised picture of innocence and purity*'. This, it is explained, can be a basis for the development of psychological problems because the pressure to do the 'right thing' as prescribed by societal norms creates a set of anxieties around failing to meet expectations, which, it is argued, can be immensely threatening to a stable and healthy sense of self, identity and belonging. Being seen as 'honourable' and 'morally clean' can create a huge pressure. Labels such as 'easy', 'slut' and 'whore' – predominantly female categories of which no male equivalent exists in language – tend to be quickly assigned.

Along similar lines as Egan and Hawkes (2009), Faulkner (2010, p. 106) also argues that '*the reasoning that engenders innocence with cultural value invites, and even demands, its violation*', positing that innocence has become '*fetishised*'. She is critical of the work of Rush and La Nauze (2006a and 2006b), as well as that of the Australian Senate's (2008) Standing Committee on Environment, Communication and the Arts, stating that these 'responsible' lamentations about the sexualisation of children and the loss of childhood innocence contribute to, rather than avert, '*a fetishisation of innocence*' that both prepares the ground for childhood to become the ultimate commodity and ignores the concrete circumstances, desires and capacities of children.

Renold and Ringrose (2011, pp. 402-3) are of the view that '*the media-fuelled sexualization moral panic has thrived on theories of girls' sexual excess, making hyper-visible the figure of the over- and/or inappropriately sexualized girl, set against a middle-class norm of developmentally appropriate (hetero)sexuality*'.

Scott *et al* (1998, p. 702) contend that '*the idea that sexuality per se is inimical to children's well-being and the concomitant withholding of sexual knowledge from them may not promote their safety – certainly in so far as they are kept ignorant of forms of adult behaviour which pose a threat*'.

Indeed, Segal (2010, p. 47) in her critical reference to Papadopoulous' report (2010) drew attention to the price of childhood 'innocence' in highlighting how in the past '*it was truly dangerous, in so many ways, for young women unable to make anything like informed choices about how to organise their sexual lives with dignity and safety*'.

In sharp contrast to the views of those arguing for a reframing of childhood away from innocence, there are the developmental psychologists, Else-Quest and Hyde (2009), who argue that a developmental lens is crucial to exploring sexualisation issues because they are profoundly different for girls and for women, and because the process and effects of sexualisation are not the same across the lifespan. Taking issue with points made by Lerum

and Dworkin (2009) in their interdisciplinary feminist critical commentary on the APA Task Force's 2007 report, they argue that while sexual desire and agency are critical for adolescent and adult females, such constructs may be less relevant for younger girls. However, in this context, Buckingham's (2011) question is interesting, on what part may be played by biology or the decreasing age at which children reach physical and sexual maturity (evidenced by the earlier onset of puberty) in the apparent sexualisation of children.

Several commentators have noted that discourses of power, discipline, surveillance and control are mobilised in the discourse of sexualisation. Biddulph's (2013) popular parenting manual, *Raising Girls: Helping your daughter to grow up wise, warm and strong*, and his rhetoric of 'saving' girls in the context of contemporary childhoods can be read from a Foucauldian-inspired perspective as the disciplining of young female bodies in a set of discourses that intersect with embodiment, performance of gendered identities and efforts by adults to control children and young people. Further to the idea that children are 'disciplined bodies', Scott *et al* (1998, p. 692) '*take it as axiomatic that childhood is socially constructed rather than being intrinsic to the state of being a child*' and contend that '*we need both to understand the social world of the child and acknowledge that this world is bounded by adult surveillance of children*'.

David Archard's conclusion is that '*in sum, the ideology of "innocence" may not protect children from sex. It may only expose them to a sexuality in the face of which innocence is debilitating*' (Archard, 1993, as cited in Aitken, 2001, p. 93).

Clearly, the move away from print media to online forms of communication (which are more easily accessed by children) has meant that it has become more difficult to keep aspects of the adult world of consumption away from children (Buckingham, 2011). Scott *et al* (1998, p. 695) argue that '*whether cast as demons or innocents, children are constructed as radically other, separating them off from the "real world" of adults – who have the power to define*'. The construction of the child 'them' versus the adult 'us' is potentially significant in understanding the construction of discourse around commercialisation and sexualisation of children to date, given that it is closely linked with discourse around control over socialisation processes, which are not unproblematic.

Markovic (2012, pp. 107-8) summarises the solutions proposed by governments, psychological societies and other socio-political institutions internationally to the 'problem' of sexualisation as follows: '... *"shielding" children from "corrosive" messages; "blocking" adult content from computers and smart phones; requiring newsagents to "cover up" magazines with sexually provocative images; "banning" sexualised imagery from adverts; "restricting access" to music videos of a sexual nature; "imposing age restrictions" on music videos; and "tightening" existing standards for classification.*' All of these proposed solutions centre on technologies of control and this is a cause of concern for Markovic, who believes that such activity could in fact perpetuate the very issues they are imagined and expected to resolve, because control and restrictions bring resentment, retort and resistance.

Buckingham (2009) also challenges governments to look at opportunities for positive intervention, as distinct from additional negative regulation, in the context that the elimination of any risk is impossible to achieve. He argues that exposure to risk is a requirement for healthy development on the grounds that such exposure builds resilience, a point that tends to be ignored in much of the literature on this topic.

The popular debate and the research agenda are, as noted by Buckingham (2009), framed by an understanding of the impact of sexualisation as 'damaging'. Yet, a number of commentators have alluded to the fact that sexualisation is not always and exclusively a negative or objectifying phenomenon. The growing visibility and accessibility of sexual imagery, products and services can be celebrated as evidence of the '*democratization of desire*' (McNair, 2002; Weeks 2007) as more sexual identities outside of the patriarchal, heterosexual family are represented or affirmed (Lerum and Dworkin, 2009).

2.6   Commercialisation, sexualisation and parent-child relationships

The relationship between parents and children has been captured by research studies in this field in terms of how parents act as participants in consumer culture, consumption gatekeepers, cultivators of consumption or transmitters of taste, and key influences in the formation of their children's identities. In Ireland, data from the longitudinal study of childhood, *Growing Up in Ireland,* intersect with a number of consumer-related issues. The report on the qualitative findings from the nine-year-old age group points to the fact that some children's perceptions of good or bad parenting and levels of parental care or neglect are connected to parents' capacity to buy material goods for them (Williams *et al*, 2009, p. 169). Indeed, the economic capital at parents' disposal is an important factor in determining in the first place to what extent parents can provide for their children's consumption requests.

Pugh (2009) utilises the concept of '*economy of dignity*' when referring to consumption as a means for children to establish social status and acceptance among their peers and to demonstrate that they are cared for by their parents. Thus, according to Pugh, consumption is very much about experiences and not only the matter of acquiring material things. As in other studies (e.g. Buckingham *et al*, 2010), there is also evidence of more egalitarian or democratic ideals and practices of child-rearing in Irish families, indicating that children, particularly as they get older, could be expected to play a bigger part in family consumption decision-making and in decisions about their own clothing or personal care (Halpenny *et al*, 2010; Williams *et al*, 2012a). Young people in Ireland, when consulted, also report that having a say and being included in consumer decisions is an important, valued component of their social inclusion in the family setting (DCYA, 2013). The dynamics as to how decisions about consumption take place in the family do not escape marketers, who seek to generate markets for their products.

Parent-child negotiations around purchases/parental attitudes to aspects of commercialisation

The strategy of '*pester power*' as described by Calvert (2008) – when explaining how '*four- to six-year-olds rely on nagging, crying, and whining to get their parents to buy them products*' – has seen its significance confirmed by the policy signature it has achieved, in the forms of marketing or advertising codes of practice or regulatory instruments. However, what is also acknowledged in the research is that children (or 'tweens' specifically, aged 9-14 years) are adept at using positive forms of communication, such as '*importance nagging*' (defined by Sutherland and Thompson (2001) as '*emotionally connecting with parents' desire to provide the best for their children and plays on guilt parents may have about not having enough time for them*'), negotiations, logical arguments and direct asks, rather than pester power, particularly when these positive forms more successfully influence parents' purchasing decisions (Prince and Martin, 2012). How children choose to talk to their parents is considered in marketing research studies to have an impact on whether parents listen to, and are influenced by, their children when purchasing (*ibid*). Children's influence on family purchase decision-making is evident in relation to holiday choices, breakfast foods and snacks purchased. This has been noted in many diverse contexts (Turner *et al*, 2006; Norgaard *et al*, 2007; Thomson *et al*, 2007).[6] The role children play in collecting coupons and adding items to shopping lists has also been documented (Norgaard *et al*, 2007). Also noted is the influence of children over their parents in such areas as technology and media consumption (Livingstone, 2009) or in terms of helping parents to modernise their own personal styles (Boden, 2006). Indeed, how parents actively consume with their children is also recognised, such as parents playing computer games with their children (Livingstone, 2009; Vares and Jackson, 2010).

---

[6]   Thomson *et al* (2007) studied 20 middle-class Scottish families with at least one child aged 13-15 years.

While some studies reveal the redirection of what are limited household economic resources towards meeting children's consumption needs and demands, it is also important to take cognisance of the studies that have found children in low-income families to be understanding of their families' financial constraints, and that have recorded their efforts to protect parents, in order to prevent arguments and to be sensitive to their feelings. This they achieve by moderating their consumer demands accordingly (Chin, 2001; Ridge, 2007).

In a large social survey conducted by Ipsos MORI (2008) with adults and children in Ireland on the issue of advertising to children in broadcasting, two-thirds of parents stated that they felt under pressure from a child to buy a product or service that they did not want. Findings also showed that four out of five children reported putting parents and other adults under pressure to buy them something they wanted and this was interpreted as evidence of the phenomenon of 'pester power'. However, small-scale qualitative research conducted by Nash (2009)[7] sheds some light on parent-child negotiations relating to purchasing decisions in the Irish context. Pestering parents was not a key feature, as it was found that children's requests in this area were similar to requests they made generally. Children accepted that parents' refusals were possible outcomes, and as a result, they did not experience undue distress when their requests were refused. The negotiations that took place had '*game-like qualities*', with both parents and children having a sense of what was involved in the game. The perceived benefits or products, the price and the money available were all considerations taken on board by parents and children when negotiating consumption. While mothers received more requests than fathers, children 'played' their parents in terms of considering who might be more favourable to what requests, and parents considered that retail outlets and peers, to a greater extent than television, influenced what their children sought to buy. In other studies, mothers are also reported as both important influencers (Kim *et al*, 2009) and the key arbiters where children's consumption is concerned (Evans and Chandler, 2006).

While the absence of parents' voices on these issues was lamented in the Bailey Review (2011), there were some surveys prior to Bailey conducted in the UK that ascertained parents' attitudes to commercialisation practices. A MORI Poll, commissioned by the National Family and Parenting Institute and used as a basis to inform its report *Hard Sell, Soft Targets?* (NFPI, 2004), revealed that 84% of those parents who responded stated that their children were targeted by companies too much. Particular marketing methods which parents disliked included cinema spin-offs, collectible toys associated with cereal products and the use of cartoon characters to promote products. Parents expressed concern about children developing attitudes that material goods had little value and could be easily dispensed with, but at the same time they reported the pressure they felt to buy products for children so that they could fit in with their peers.

An exploratory study by Turner *et al* (2006) involved the distribution of 301 questionnaires to a local primary school in Dundee (49% response rate). It found that 60% of those parents who responded reported that their children influenced their food shopping decisions and the majority were of the opinion that television advertising was a significant source of influence on their children's choices. How factors such as parent guilt, family type, working lifestyles or family income related to family food buying were identified as areas worthy of further investigation.

In research conducted by Nairn (2008), parents reported difficulties in keeping pace with what is marketed to their children through information and communication technologies. They were also concerned about their lack of knowledge about how widespread marketing practices they considered undesirable for their children might be, or what to do about them. According to the Mothers Union (2010) in the UK, parents felt they had no voice or opportunity for redress when they considered commercialisation and sexualisation practices

---

[7] This small study involved interviews with mothers and fathers in three families (reasonably diverse in terms of income and other characteristics) and four focus groups with their 5-11 year-old children and other children.

inappropriate and they sought more regulation in these areas. In contrast, other research in the UK highlights parents' scepticism about whether legislation could address concerns they had (Buckingham, 2011).

Parental concerns/initiatives undertaken by parents

Since the Bailey Review (2011), the Family Lives and TeenBoundaries (2012) report[8] stated that while parents were concerned about the effects of sexualised imagery and marketing on their children, they were also concerned about the effects of the pressure induced by 'ideal' body images and the prevalence of gender stereotypes in the media. It also found that parents reported greater difficulties talking to their children about issues relating to sexuality and pornography than other topics (e.g. drugs, smoking, peer pressure and bullying). Phoenix (2011) also observed that despite the evidence that parents do express concerns, there is little by way of tangible research findings that family communications are fraught with tensions generated specifically by these issues (Thomson *et al*, 2007; Hamilton, 2009; Nash, 2009; Phoenix, 2011). In a national study conducted by Wartella *et al* in 2013 on the topic of parenting children up to eight years of age in the digital technological age in Australia, the majority of parents (78%) surveyed did not report having family conflict or expressing concern/disagreements with spouses (83%) in relation to their children's media use. It was also found that a significant number of parents (63%) reported having media rules governing children's usage. The same survey revealed that parents assessed video games more negatively than other media (televisions, computers and other mobile devices) where their children were concerned. Other studies reveal fairly extensive evidence that boys' consumption is viewed by parents in a much more relaxed way than that of girls' consumption, and that parents attempt to exert more control in terms of adjudicating on the propriety of clothing bought by girls compared to boys (Croghan *et al*, 2006; Bragg *et al*, 2011). What is strongly established as a result of research findings is that, just as in the sexualisation discourse, parents' concerns about sexualisation are indeed very strongly gendered.

To investigate commercialisation and sexualisation culture, Bragg *et al* (2011) conducted nine focus groups with 43 participants (35 women and eight men), which included a mix of class backgrounds and parent types, in Scotland in the period 2009 and 2010. They found that many parents felt reluctant to damage their relationships with their children over their consumption of sexualised clothes or goods. At times, parents felt that peer pressure to fit in was a more damaging influence than commercial or media influences on their children. The focus group discussions also highlighted the ambiguity among parents as to what goods were clearly identifiable as 'sexualised' and this ambiguity resulted in different courses of action taken by parents. For example, parents' desires to protect younger children's innocence made them unsure about whether or not they should explain to children the association between Playboy products and the sex industry. Participants also favoured parental choice over State regulation, although they did indicate that they would like more support with dealing with what they considered to be commercial exploitation of their children. Parents highlighted how their own decisions and practices as parents could be undermined by the lack of inexpensive alternatives to products which became part of mainstream culture, or by practices in schools (e.g. prom nights) or other adults practices (e.g. birthday presents given to their children, which they thought were unsuitable) (Bragg *et al*, 2011). This indicates how parents' responses to sexualised goods are rarely entirely individual, but moderated or impacted upon by the actions of other individuals and societal institutions and practices.

What this research by Bragg *et al* (2011) reveals is how consumption practices involving children are deeply embedded in relational contexts, which include family, extended family, school and the wider community. None of these sites are free of market relations. What is also noteworthy is the finding that parents often think of their own children as 'less preyed upon' by commercial and sexualised influences than children generally in the population.

[8]   The Family Lives and TeenBoundaries (2012) report used survey data conducted with parents of 8-17 year-olds on issues such as pornography, technology and media as a source of information.

While there is also research evidence demonstrating that not all parents are concerned by commercialisation and sexualisation debates, or exercised in the same ways, other parents are sufficiently motivated to act individually and in groups on these issues. The 'Kids Free 2B Kids' group (KF2BK) was founded by a Melbourne mother in 2007 out of a concern about the increasing sexualisation of children in the media, advertising and clothing industry. The 'Let Toys Be Toys' (LTBT) campaign in the UK has engaged parents' support in its demands for retailers to end gender-specific toy marketing. Some success has been achieved, with Boots, Asda, Morrisons, Next and Hobbycraft making some changes to in-store signage, labelling and website categories. As evidenced on the LTBT website (http://www.lettoysbetoys.org.uk), some parents have taken their own initiatives as consumers of toys to encourage retailers not to promote toys for 'boys' and 'girls'. A UK mother, Hattie Garlick, generated much publicity and interest from other mothers worldwide when she started her blog (freeourkids.co.uk) in 2013, documenting throughout the year the opportunities and challenges she encountered after she personally committed to not engage in any 'kiddy consumerism' for a year. As a result, she spent no money in 2013 on new toys, new clothes, kiddy snacks, paid-for activities, disposable nappies or professional haircuts for her two-year-old son, primarily to prove that a lot of consumption is not necessary in order to ensure a child's well-being (Garlick, 2013).

Much of the popular literature, but also the academic research literature, offers advice to parents on what they should do to exercise their roles properly as guardians of their children's consumption. This has led to Jan Macvarish (in Attwood *et al*, 2012) in her blog post to comment critically that inherent in the sexualisation of children discourse is the infantilisation of parents' discourse, with parents being mythically presented as ill-equipped to guide their children through a more visibly sexual culture without greater regulation or expert guidance and education. Indeed, as highlighted by Egan and Hawkes (2008a), the issue of the sexualisation of children requiring parent training informed by expert knowledge is not a new phenomenon, but one that seems to have intensified in recent years. The sexualisation discourse locates the culpability with parents, alongside media and industry, when they indulge their children's consumption desires, buy the sexualised commodities they want, or pay for cosmetic surgery (APA, 2007; Bailey, 2011). It is also important to point out that implicit in the discourse about parents' roles in relation to child consumption are *mothers*, a gendering that according to Buckingham (2011), is too often ignored in the literature.

2.7   Summary of key points in the literature

> Sexualisation and commercialisation are elastic concepts in the way they tend to be discursively constructed. It is not always clear what is meant by them when they are deployed in academic work or in popular discourse. This is a study concerned with exploring commercialisation and sexualisation as they relate to children. However, the Research Team acknowledges, as shown in the literature, how discourses of commercialisation and sexualisation can conflate different issues, potentially obscure children's agency, pathologise persons' ways of being in the world (particularly girls and working-class young people) and promote negative effects discourses as well as normative assumptions about healthy sexuality and consumption.

> As a concept, sexualisation, in particular, is deployed in a variety of sources in ways which some researchers find highly unsatisfactory.

> While a number of reviews have been undertaken in different contexts to inform policy interventions to address commercialisation and sexualisation, these reviews have been welcomed by some, but subjected to considerable critical analysis by others.

> While sexualisation and commercialisation are relatively new concepts, the concerns raised by these phenomena as they are discussed and debated in a contemporary context are not predominantly new. The phenomenon of children dressing as sexual adults is not new, but that there are more sexual images, a greater interest in sexual values and identities,

or an intensification of the sexual in contemporary culture finds much agreement in the literature. Whether the intensification of the commercial and the sexual is more positive or negative for society is also debated.

› Children are equated with innocence and nature in our culture. Policies and practices devised to protect children against sexualisation do so on the grounds that children are asexual and unknowing. However, there is a body of literature that draws attention to the problems with this construction of children as innocent, simply because it makes children susceptible to abuse and exploitation. This construction of children as innocent also explains why any kind of sexual representation may be understood as 'sexualising' if it is consumed by children.

› There are concerns in the literature that the framing of sexualisation as a child protection issue takes the focus off sexualisation as a *gender* issue, which requires altering the balance of power between genders, and challenging misogyny and negative attitudes towards females in popular culture and in society more generally.

› That sexualisation and commercialisation **may** cause harms to children's well-being is the precautionary principle that has often informed policy interventions because there is a lack of evidence of direct causative effects on children's well-being. At best, there are associations rather than causative effects established between certain factors.

› Many problems beset the commercialisation and sexualisation research agenda. Most notable among these are the preponderance of one type of research (the 'effects' research approach) over others and the ethical challenges involved in engaging children in the kinds of research that would be required to demonstrate 'effects'. Much of the literature is concerned with addressing the limitations or challenges posed by the conduct of research on these issues.

› A significant body of literature indicates that parent-child interactions relating to commercialisation and sexualisation are complex, highly relational and contextual, despite the popularity of such slogans as 'pester power', which tend to simplify these interactions.

› In the Irish context, we have little insight into what parents think about many aspects of consumption and sexualisation either as participants in consumer culture themselves or as people parenting children in a contemporary context.

3. Public discourse in Ireland on commercialisation and sexualisation of children

The following overview explores how the themes of commercialisation and sexualisation of children are being framed in public discourse in Ireland. Three key questions guide the analysis throughout:

1. How are children being defined and represented?
2. What evidence is used to support perspectives/positions adopted on the issues?
3. What solutions are proffered?

A broad but systematic qualitative analysis was conducted across a number of discursive areas, namely Parliamentary discussions, contributions from non-governmental organisations (CARI, ISPCC) and the parents' website, www.RollerCoaster.ie. Finally, the latter part of the analysis considers media coverage and narrows the focus to examine the media treatment of three 'flashpoint' moments that occurred in 2013 in Irish public discourse on these issues: the first Child Beauty Pageant held in Ireland, the 'Slane girl' episode and the arrival of the video game 'Grand Theft Auto V' on the Irish market.

3.1   Parliamentary discussions

A number of Parliamentary discussions were identified by means of an online search of the Houses of the Oireachtas's own online search facility, using the search term 'sexualisation'. A search using the term 'commercialisation' was futile by comparison, possibly indicating that it is not to the same extent defined as a problem of childhood and that the harms it is perceived to cause for children are discussed in relation to other issues such as sexualisation, obesity, etc. In total, the term 'sexualisation' was mentioned in 35 Dáil and Seanad debates (*see Appendix 8*). The first mention of sexualisation was in 1998 in a Dáil discussion on the Child Trafficking and Pornography Bill (1997), when Dan Neville, TD, stated that '*the portrayal of child pornography material has a very corrosive quality in that it sexualises child innocence*'. In the same discussion, John O'Donoghue, TD (Minister for Justice and Law Reform), commenting on Dan Neville's statement, emphasised the need for greater responsibility to be taken to address this issue. He urged parents to '*not sexualise their children*' by dressing them as young adults and he called on advertisers to be more careful about how they '*depict children in advertisements*'. This type of commentary was typical of the debates generally, in that links were frequently made between the pornography industry or child trafficking, and mainstream advertising or fashion culture. This is not to say that links, however inchoate or complex, do not exist, but rather to point to the ease with which crimes, such as child trafficking, can be conflated in public discourse with, or linked to, symbolic cultural acts or behaviours, such as young people dressing in a particular way.

All other uses of the term 'sexualisation' were in the period from 2000 onwards, with most references from the mid-2000s. The topic arose in the context of debates about suicide, child pornography on the Internet, sexual abuse, paedophilia, illegal drug use, prostitution, broadcasting, eating disorders, education and child trafficking. In nearly all of these debates, similar links were made between the issues under discussion and the sexualisation of young people. In a Joint Committee on Child Protection issues in 2006, the chairperson of that committee noted that '*every parent laments and abhors the trend towards the premature sexualisation of children in circumstances where their physical maturity outstrips their emotional maturity*' and further legislation was identified as required to respond to this problem.

In 2006 and 2007, when the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Bill 2007 was before the Dáil, there was frequent mention of sexualisation by a number of Deputies. Brian Hayes, TD, mentioned the '*sexualisation of women of a very young age*' and Jim O'Keeffe, TD, blamed a range of different media (including television, radio and newspaper publications) for participating in '*almost vulgarising public life and discourse*' and for sexualising children. While he doubted that it was possible to '*turn the tide*', he did iterate Parliamentarians' responsibility to provide robust laws to address what could be addressed. Peter Power, TD, in March 2007, lamented that societal sexualisation was making children '*particularly young girls see themselves as mere sex objects without dignity*'. He claimed that he was merely expressing a deep frustration that was held by parents in Ireland that the innocence of childhood cannot be enjoyed as a result of 'sexualisation

as a global phenomenon'. He went on to comment: '*This is a society in which children instead of reading "Roy of the Rovers" or Enid Blyton books or going out to play football with their friends in a safe and secure environment are instead at 14 years of age accessing gay sex sites.*'

As seen in the literature review on the subject (*see Chapter 2*), links have been made between the growing cultural acceptability of sexual imagery, the sexual 'objectification' of girls and the increasing demand for pornography in research studies, but also it must be noted that there is a lack of evidence to support many of the direct causal links assumed in discourse. Links made between girls' sexualised clothing and the incidence of rape or paedophilia are especially difficult to sustain given Ireland's recently exposed history of institutional child abuse, in which sexualised clothing (or 'raunch culture') did not play a role. Moreover, as a result of the superficial nature of these Parliamentary debates, the ideological grounds for politicians' opposition to particular phenomena are not made clear. It is difficult to know whether the objection to certain images, clothes or practices stems simply from their sexual explicitness or from the gender inequality/sexism/misogyny that characterises them. Girls are either invisible in the debates, in the sense that politicians speak frequently about the sexualisation of children when they actually mean girls, or they are hyper-visible, in that their expression/subjectivity tended to be constructed as problematic. In contrast to when girls dress as women, which is necessarily seen as a cause for concern, there is little if any attention given to boys wearing physically revealing clothing (e.g. trousers worn with underwear showing) or of boys dressing like men. Thus, rather than addressing the fact that these inequities merely serve to reveal society's more general insistence on the sexualisation of women, the debates simply ignore the wider systems of gender and power inequalities, and associated sexualisation of adult women.

The Parliamentary debates examined in this study are also premised upon a range of assumptions about childhood innocence, for example, that children are sexually naïve until a particular – unspecified – age; that technology and the media are almost always negative forces; that children have no agency in their media engagements; that the meaning of certain types of clothing, cultural performance, etc. is transparent and universal; and that girls, in particular, are passive, asexual subjects whose knowledge and experience of being sexual is being induced prematurely by external forces. Almost without exception, the solutions called for are legislative rather than educational, and the underlying causes or complex social, cultural and economic factors which give rise to the various problems being discussed are rarely addressed. The Parliamentary contributions to the discourse on sexualisation reveal that sexualisation has increasingly come to be recognised and defined in recent decades in Irish society *as a social problem requiring political solutions*. There was no discussion about the potential benefits of a more open society in which sex could be discussed more freely and in which children could be better educated towards advancing their sexual citizenship.

To conclude, a discursive coalition is in operation in the Irish Parliamentary discourse, in that an ensemble of narratives are meshed together to shape a particular construction of this policy issue. Despite slightly different emphases on who or what is to blame and who has to take responsibility, innocent children, predominantly girls, are constructed as being threatened by a variety of forms of cultural consumption. Media technologies themselves (rather than their potential to exacerbate dominant socio-economic values) are frequently blamed and the problem is defined as one of the destruction of children's or girls' innocence. Thus, any conception of the adolescent as a legitimate sexual agent in their own right is obscured, and solutions in the form of further regulation and legislation are those most often advocated, while the precise nature of such legislation, in which areas or how it might operate, generally remains unspecified.

3.2   Non-governmental organisations' contributions

The Parliamentary contributions reveal that a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) based in Ireland have contributed significantly to the public discourse on sexualisation of children in Irish society. The children's charity Children at Risk in Ireland (CARI) and the Rape Crisis Centres have been at the forefront in raising concerns.

The early sexualisation of children and children's easy access to pornography were blamed for an increase in rapes and sexual assaults among minors by CARI at the launch of its 2011 Annual Report (Baker, 2012). In the same year, CARI had registered a 57% growth in calls to its helpline (212 calls in 2011; 76 calls in 2010) from parents concerned about children's sexualised behaviour (CARI, 2010, 2011 and 2012). In September 2013, speaking at the launch of the CARI Annual Report for 2012, which showed a small reduction in helpline calls from parents (191 in 2012), the organisation's Acting National Director drew attention to the increased number of rape and sex abuse allegations received by the organisation (up from 132 in 2011 to 351 in 2012). Again, an association was made between early sexualisation and early access to pornography and increased allegations of sexual assault and increasing reports of attacks by more than one perpetrator. She argued that easy access to pornography, was normalising deviant sexual behaviour among young people.

Similarly, Ellen O'Malley-Dunlop, CEO of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, was reported in the *Irish Examiner* in July 2011 as strongly believing that there '*can't but be a causal link between teenage boys*' 24/7 exposure to pornography and the rise in teenage sexual assault (O'Sullivan, 2011). In the same newspaper report, it was stated that '*Mary Crilly [CEO, Cork Rape Crisis Centre], Ellen O'Malley-Dunlop and all the other women working in sexual assault services have all expressed grave concerns at the hyper-sexualisation of society and the effects this is having on teenagers*'.

It is predominantly the psychological 'effects' research findings that provide support for claims made in the media of the links between problematic behaviours among teenagers, pornography and the mainstreaming of sex in culture. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, the links are certainly not as straightforward as they are often presented in media discourse. As highlighted by Buckingham (2011), space in the media is created for NGO and 'expert' commentators to define the contours of social problems, and as these are frequently cumulative and mutually enforcing, problems come to be actively constructed in particular ways and not in others, and the modes of intervention required come to be increasingly legitimated. Yet, in the fields of commercialisation and sexualisation, our understandings are shaped by so many divergent and oftentimes ideologically opposed concepts relating to public/private, childhood, rights, sexual morality, the construction of gender, the nature of identity, the power of the media, consumerism and gender equality.

Other NGOs (such as Barnardos) have been more focused on addressing the child Internet safety issue. In 2009, Barnardos published a report entitled *Three Hazards: Child Protection in the Electronic Age*.[9] The 'three hazards' relate to children's personal privacy, children's data protection and child sex abuse imagery. One of the key concerns of the report was around social networking sites, with the author identifying pseudo profiling and age verification as '*the single greatest issue that arises when addressing personal privacy issues on social network sites*' (McKenna and Childwatch.ie, 2009, p. 3). In 2013, when pornography filters were becoming a signficant part of the UK Government's policy agenda, the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC) reportedly criticised the Irish Government for not taking similar action (Buckley, 2013). Furthermore, the ISPCC has also taken an active role in campaiging against bullying, in particular cyberbullying, and has called for greater protections to be afforded to children when going online.

In an article opposing the lowering of the age of sexual consent in Ireland from 17 to 16 years of age, Cliona Ní Saidlear (Rape Crisis Network Ireland) identified some of the '*uncomfortable places*' where we do not go in Ireland and which thus limit our conversations about, and responses to, the objectification and sexualisation of the female body. She states: '*In Ireland,*

---

9   This report is based on a study carried out by Pat McKenna of Childwatch.ie for Barnardos. This study was commissioned by Barnardos and undertaken between April and September 2008 by 2SAPlus Limited on Barnardos' behalf. Contributions were sought and obtained for the study from a wide range of people (76 in all) in positions of governance and management in the information technology domain of organisations operating in child-related sectors, including healthcare agencies, education, Government departments, telecommunications companies, child service organisations, IT security companies and software manufacturers.

we have no mandatory sex education in our secondary schools. Consent and relationship education is often treated as suspect, while status quo complicit, victim-blaming safety lists for girls are seen as responsible interventions. There is no national prevalence study of children's sexual knowledge, attitudes and behaviours because it was deemed unethical to ask children about the reality of their experiences as recently as 2005. Where we do measure (adult) cultural knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of sex and sexual health, we are invariably coy about sexual violence' (Ní Saidlear, 2014).

Ní Saidlear's comments were unusual in that she emphasised the crucial role played by sex education, a theme which is largely absent from public discourse on this topic. Moreover, she challenged a dominant tendency within Irish discourse to inadvertently blame victims by focusing on girls' clothing rather than on the dynamics of a culture in which boys and men are constructed as predatory and unable to help themselves. Perhaps most importantly, she raised the issue of Irish people's discomfort with talking about sex, among one another and with children.

To conclude, the small sample of NGO contributions to the sexualisation issue examined here have very usefully raised concerns about children's access to and use of pornography, children's sexualised behaviour and sexual assaults perpetrated by children against other children. However, phenomena associated with the 'sexualisation' of children, when identified as factors causing a particular social problem, prompt particular solutions to the problem to be pursued, but without the required evidence. Indeed, as Fanghanel (2013) noted, connections made between sexualisation and sexual violence promotes girls' safe-keeping as an effective response to sexual violence and locates the responsibility for sexual assault with victims, who thus continue to be implicated in their victimisation by their sexualised dress, demeanour or behaviour.

3.3   Discourses on parenting websites

Mumsnet, a UK parenting online community/website, has become a significant stakeholder in childhood and sexualisation debates in the UK (Pederson and Smithson, 2013). For the purpose of this study, a similar, albeit less influential, website, www.RollerCoaster.ie, was used to analyse posts from parents in Ireland seeking support and advice on the topics of sexualisation and commercialisation. RollerCoaster.ie is advertised as 'Ireland's No. 1 site for Pregnancy and Parenting'. Parenting discussions can be accessed under the 'parenting' link and, at the time the website was consulted, there were 43 posts (from January 2010 to 14 April 2013) by parents in the teen and pre-teen category, which was the only category consulted. Only those posts and the replies they generated, which were relevant to the study topic as denoted by the title of the post, were consulted.[10] These posts provide useful insights into what kinds of concerns or 'crises' parents (predominantly mothers) had in terms of the issues being researched as they related to their pre-teens and teens and what they sought advice on from other parents. Parents' replies to posts also provide useful insights into axes of agreement and divergence of opinion.

With regard to commercialisation, there were a significant number of posts from parents seeking advice from others on appropriate amounts of pocket money to give children of all ages, including their adult children in college. In discussions about pocket money, parents often expressed relief that their sons or daughters were not interested in designer clothes or labels, or that their interest in these had declined. Posts relating to pocket money revealed a variety of different parenting practices, ranging from the provision of allowances (either conditional or not conditional on chores being completed) to providing larger allowances to cover all their children's consumption and to end ongoing requests for more. Some parents did not give pocket money to their children, while others believed that it provided children with opportunities to learn to manage money, as evidenced by children saving their pocket money to buy bigger items or learning to live within their means.

---

[10]   This is not a systematic search, since some posts which seemed relevant were deleted and others, if their title did not suggest their relevance, might not have been accessed. Although not systematic or rigorous, the exercise does provide insights into issues relating to commercialisation and sexualisation raised by parents.

Other queries raised by parents related to buying presents for teenagers, especially for birthdays, or the best places for clothes shopping with teenage girls (e.g. buying their first bra, very tall for their age or experiencing difficulty finding shoes that fit them). Parents also discussed the 'shag bands'[11] that had become popular with young children, with one parent stating that she had banned them outright in her home, but was later thinking that she was maybe too 'uptight' if her children did not entirely understand their meaning. Some mothers sought advice on magazines that did not include 'sexual articles' and that might be appropriate for young female teenagers.

All aspects of young people's computer and phone use and gaming generated concern and discussion among parents. These included questions about the suitability of particular computer games their children (mainly sons) wanted them to buy; the length of time young people spent using computers and phones; and the 'rules' around Internet use. One parent shared her concerns about some of the '*pics of teenage girls wearing practically nothing draped over fellas*' and the language used by young girls, which she saw when she scrolled down through the newsfeeds when her son allowed her access to his Facebook account. Other parents expressed similar concerns, mainly relating to girls' pictures and use of vulgar language on Facebook, but they also sought advice on the appropriate age for young people to use Facebook. Some parents were unsure about whether it was a good idea to try and keep their children from using Facebook until they were aged 15. There were a number of posts from parents expressing concern when they found that their sons (mainly young teens, but some as young as 10 years old) had accidentally, or deliberately, accessed pornography on the Internet or were sending pornographic messages by phone to others. A few reported the conversations they had with their sons when they knew they had accessed pornographic material. For example, one parent of a 10-year-old, who was upset by what he saw on the Internet when on a play date at a friend's house, wrote: '*We … had to explain to him how it was a different world he had witnessed and nothing like what a relationship would be like. I had to tell him about paedophiles and how searching for the wrong thing could even get him in trouble with the law*.'

Much advice was sought and proffered in relation to safeguarding computers or phones when pre-teens or teens are using them, and parents frequently highlighted their concerns for their children due to what they perceived as their own ignorance of new technologies and social networking. A few posts suggested that parents were wasting their time trying to prevent their teenage children's access to and use of pornographic material, and that parents would be better off accepting that access and use of such material is highly likely, discuss it with their children and leave it at that.

Apart from access to pornography, which concerned mainly parents of sons, posts categorised as relating to sexualisation overwhelmingly featured girls. Parents keen to respond to their daughters' own concerns about their physical appearance, and their desires to prevent any bullying that might result from this, frequently sought advice on face and body hair removal techniques and on suitable deodorants to reduce body odour, particularly for very young daughters. Other parents also sought advice on how to respond to daughters' requests to wear make-up to school when there was no policy on make-up in the schools they attended. Some parents were advised to compromise on this by permitting their daughters to wear tinted moisturiser rather than full foundation.

Pre-teens and teenage girls' clothing when attending school or discos generated a degree of discussion among parents, with some parents commenting on young girls rolling up the waistbands of their school skirts to fit in with the school trend. Apart from short skirts and short shorts, high-heeled shoes also generated a number of posts, with one woman reporting that one daughter had '*a selection of horrors [high-heeled shoes]*' for discos while the other daughter was happy to wear converse shoes'.

---

[11]   'Shag bands', as they became known, were friendship bracelets that became popular among children. But the various band colours were associated with a range of sexual activities and the wearing of them indicated levels of sexual experience.

Childhood innocence featured prominently, albeit in different ways, in the parents' conversations on RollerCoaster.ie. Many of the posts revealed how shocked and hurt parents feel when they realise that their sons and daughters are 'no longer innocent' or when they perceive that their innocence has been 'lost' or destroyed, as in the case of their accidental or deliberate access to and use of pornography. Concerns about daughters featured more in the posts, with the only exception being access to and use of pornography, which was mostly raised and discussed in relation to male pre-teens and teens.

Unsurprisingly, young people's consumption of new technologies generated the largest number of posts and a significant number of responses, indicating that parents are more concerned about those areas of their children's lives over which they feel less equipped to exercise control. This was oftentimes acknowledged by parents themselves, who were using RollerCoaster to seek advice from others on this aspect of parenting.

Overall, the discussion threads on this website were broadly reflective of sexualisation and commercialisation discourses in other fora. Sexualisation was perceived as relating predominantly to girls, with the focus on children's investment in sexualisation practices relating to clothing and make-up, and was seen to relate to boys only in the context of access to pornography. With regard to commercialisation, as elsewhere, discussions about pocket money, consumerism/brands and technology were more gender-neutral, with young people's use of technology generating the most concern among parents.

3.4   Media coverage

While, as some commentators have noted (Bragg, 2012; Gill, 2012), certain sectors of the media are centrally responsible for proliferating sexualised content, they initiate campaigns to address these phenomena. At the time of data collection (2013), issues of commercialisation and sexualisation were strongly evident in the Irish print, television, radio and online media, and had been for several years. Since the scope of the study did not permit a large-scale content analysis of the Irish media, we selected instead a representative sample of special feature articles and series from the mainstream press during the period 2011-2013. We also conducted a qualitative analysis of media coverage of three 'flashpoint' events that occurred in 2013, namely Ireland's first Child Beauty Pageant, the 'Slane girl' incident and the launch of the video game 'Grand Theft Auto V' in the Irish market (*for full details, see Appendix 9*).

The analysis revealed that discourses on the sexualisation of children in the Irish print media are predominantly rooted in a protectionist discourse and are very often capped by sensationalist headlines, while the content of articles is bolstered by parent testimony, contributions from psychologists and, in some instances, interviews with teenagers. The following headlines are representative of this tendency, whereby sexualisation is framed as a threat to children's innocence and predominantly as a child protection issue:

> ›   'Bringing lads' mags to heel is a start in battle to protect our children' (*Herald*, 8 June 2011)
> ›   'Surge in fears over sexualisation of children' (*Irish Examiner*, 26 July 2012)
> ›   'Small children mean big business for advertisers' (*The Irish Times*, 16 October 2012)
> ›   'The kids aren't alright: Social media and the death of innocence' (*Sunday Independent*, 24 March 2013).

Frequently, in the samples taken from the Irish print media, connections were made between the sexualisation of children and other trends or social problems in society, such as the incidence of eating disorders, the prevalence of pornography and the perpetration of sexual abuse by children or young people. In July 2011, in what was widely publicised in a billboard campaign, journalist Claire O'Sullivan published a three-day special investigation in the *Irish Examiner* into teenage sexuality.

In the first of these feature articles, 'Teens not all talk when it comes to sex', O'Sullivan (2011a) talked to 20 young people aged 14-17 about 'what young people are really up to' in 'towns and cities' throughout the country. Accessing boys' views proved challenging for the writer, but 'getting girls to divulge … was not difficult'. Young people's confidence around their sexuality was considered part-admirable and part-disarming. In the opening lines of the article, O'Sullivan reported: '*Fifteen-year-olds are having sex and they're enjoying it. Fourteen-year-olds are going to alcohol-free discos without any underwear on and 16-year-olds are (when supposedly on sleepovers in a friend's house) performing oral sex on two different guys in a night.*' Teenagers were asked questions about their access to and use of pornography, their 'dressing promiscuously', the pressure they feel to be sexually active, their fear of earning a negative reputation, the pressure to be macho and 'the sexting phenomenon'. Romance, according to O'Sullivan, was something sneered at by teens, who were aware that they lived and coped in a 'hypersexualised world'.

In the second article of the special investigation, 'Out of control', O'Sullivan (2001b) opened with the claim that '*our hypersexualised society is having devastating consequences for children, with teen rape cases far more commonplace*'. It featured contributions from women working in sexual assault services, a school guidance counsellor and a clinical psychologist. Certain trends, such as increased sexually transmitted infections among young people and use of pornography, were presented as difficult to comprehend in the context that '*no other generation of young Irish have received as much sex education as this crop*'. The article finished with 55-year-old James and two other adult men relating their stories of pornography addiction. The third, and final part of the special investigation, 'Growing pains for teens and parents', was presented in a question-and-answer format, where a clinical psychologist provided advice to parents on how '*they can help to steer their child through some of the problems they face in today's hypersexualised world*' (O'Sullivan, 2011c).

Similar concerns were raised in an *Irish Independent Weekend Review* (2013), which featured a number of articles under the headline 'Cuddly toys, dating boys'. In one of these, John Meagher wrote about '*twerking and slut-shaming*' as an introduction to '*how parents can protect their teenage daughters in a world that demands they grow up too fast*'. While this piece suggested the demeanour and behaviour of teenage girls as necessarily problematic, it also reported evidence of teenagers acting in a sexually responsible manner, supported by the Crisis Pregnancy Programme's reported decrease in teenage pregnancy, and ended with a plea from a psychologist to parents to protect their daughters in '*a world trying to rob children of their innocence*'. Adopting a similar tone, the Living Section of the *Sunday Independent* (20 October, 2013) contained a special report entitled 'Generation Porn: Technology and the Destruction of Innocence', which included 'the big story' entitled 'The Warping of Our Teens' View of Sex'.

All of the feature articles and series analysed here shared certain tendencies: sensationalist 'facts' about what young people are doing; a strong investment in the notion of childhood innocence being eroded as evidenced by teenagers' sexual knowledge and activity; a tendency to seek expert opinion from clinical psychologists; reference to psychological 'effects' studies; and the inclusion of testimonials warning about the dangers of pornography, the Internet or teenage sex. That child and youth sexualities are potentially problematic, dangerous and disordered is thus a pervasive theme in the Irish media coverage reviewed for this study. Instead of the word 'sexualisation' the prefix 'hyper' was sometimes utilised, as if to suggest that what is happening to children in society is more than 'sexualisation' – it is excessive sexualisation and it is almost always constructed as a negative external force. Its impact is understood as capable of disrupting children's 'natural' sense of who they are as sexually innocent and unknowing. Frequently, increases in sexual abuse and violence are explained with reference to sexualised culture and use of pornography. The frequent use of parent testimony or confessional pieces, as well as advice to parents from clinical psychologists, enables a conceptualisation of the problem as one that can be addressed predominantly by the education of parents as those primarily responsible for children in Irish society.

3.5 Case studies of public 'concern'

This section considers the media treatment of three 'flashpoint' moments that occurred in 2013 in Irish public discourse involving the issues of commercialisation and sexualisation of children. The details of the media coverage for each event are given in Appendix 9.

The first of these was an 'American-style' child beauty pageant held in Castleblayney, Co Monaghan, in September 2013. Open to babies, toddlers and teens, it was the first event of its kind to be held in Ireland. It sparked extensive media interest in print, online articles and television broadcasts and segments, and generated widespread criticism at both a public and political level. In Irish public debate, the child beauty pageant was constructed as the dark side of the sexualisation of children. Women and mothers were castigated for what is a female-led and driven phenomenon. Solutions proffered varied from a legislative ban to the deployment of collective social disapproval, directed at mothers who might put their children forward for such a competition and at hotels that might host such competitions. While the prospect of staging such a US-style event in Ireland made some journalists feel like they were living in an 'alien place' (O'Hanlon, 2013), for others it drew some parallels with Irish dancing competitions and aspects of the sexual socialisation of girls more generally in Irish society (O'Mahony, 2013).

The second event revolved around an incident involving a young teenage girl at an Eminem concert in Slane Castle in August 2013. Unlike the media commentary surrounding the child beauty pageant (*see above*), in which nobody drew attention to the radically different social attitudes directed towards girls performing womanhood and boys performing manhood, the 'Slane girl' incident provoked a range of radically divergent attitudes, at both national and international levels, in online and offline media about gender equity and male and female sexuality. The incident, which involved photographs and videos of a young teenage girl giving oral sex to a male concert-goer being uploaded online and trending worldwide, raised many questions and concerns in the media around personal privacy and how social media can enable exploitation and abuse. However, the diagnosis of the problem in the media varied: it was the fault of young girls who behaved badly; alternatively, it was a problem generated by social media networking or it was a manifestation of deep-seated misogyny in society at large. The solutions varied accordingly, from seeking to make parents and young girls more responsible for their conduct and indiscretions, to looking for stronger regulation of social media and calling for a radical transformation of oppressive societal attitudes towards women and their sexualities.

The third event concerned the arrival of the video game 'Grand Theft Auto V' on the Irish market in January 2013. It provides a good example of the interconnections between commercialisation and sexualisation, as evidenced in Irish media coverage. Parents were informed that they would be 'plagued by requests' to buy it and they were encouraged to resist the 'pester power' from teens to buy the game, which has an over-18s gaming certificate (O'Mahony, 2013). At the same time, articles alerted parents to the game's 'highly violent' and 'sexualised content' (Mitchell O'Connor, 2013; O'Mahony, 2013). The perceived damaging effects of this form of entertainment for teens were underscored, for example, by the assignment of blame on this game by judges when presiding over cases of sexual offences committed against women and by contributions from mental health specialists who made reference to young people's developing sexualities and who drew connections between the influence of sexually violent video games on behaviour (O'Mahony, 2013).

3.6 Summary

The concept of child sexualisation is relatively new in Irish public discourse. Since 1981, articles emerged in the US public sphere lamenting the sexualisation of girls and the discourse has been traced back to the early 1990s in the UK (Duschinsky, 2013). While there are slightly different emphases and concerns, much of the discourse analysed in this study is similar to that in other contexts, in that it presumes and idealises a prior 'natural' state in the child

located outside of the sexual and commercial, which is characterised by innocence and purity and which becomes sullied by consumption of particular cultural forms, earlier and earlier in childhood, some of which are considered more distasteful than others. In this way, any demonstration of sexual subjectivity on the part of a child or young person is delegitimated as a premature and pathological imposition by culture and society.

Children, in much of the public discourse analysed, were constructed as simply buying into what is expected of them in a commercialised and sexualised landscape and any evidence to the contrary was only fleetingly discussed. Parents, more typically mothers, were called upon to rise up to the challenges to protect their children, to resist children's 'pestering' in the case of Grand Theft Auto and to behave more as parents if they want their children to be children. This is in keeping with a neoliberal shift in governance from the State towards greater self-governability on the part of individuals, in this instance parents, also evident in sexualisation discourses in other contexts (Gill, 2012). Expert or practitioner knowledge was also commandeered and added vital legitimacy to claims of harm and damage caused to children by aspects of sexualisation and commercialisation. It was also used to link these phenomena with other serious social problems. As a result, gendered violence was frequently attributed to the commercialisation and sexualisation of children and to increased access to and use of pornography.

Discourses on sexualisation and commercialisation are important because they bring serious issues to public attention. However, the current status of public debate in Ireland indicates that we urgently need to respond to Duschinsky and Barker's (2013) call to investigate more precisely and carefully what harms and suffering are being caused by what and to whom, and to have a robust debate on what can be done. The analysis of public discourse indicates that too many diverse issues are simplistically perceived as 'problems' and attributable to sexualisation and commercialisation, and show them to be the '*elastic discourses*' described by Albury and Lumby (2010). Such discourses, they note, are elastic enough to cover any kind of sexual expression and a whole set of concerns about different issues (e.g. body image, sexual violence) as effects and evidence of sexualisation (*see Chapter 2*).

In the discourses analysed, there is a heavy focus on Internet safety/danger, the surveillance of children and teenagers, the corruption of childhood (posited as a knowable and homogeneously experienced state of development that is necessarily innocent and asexual) and the sexuality of girls. In the media, there is a lack of consultation, with 'experts' operating within a social construction of gender model and a strong bias towards psychological opinion and practice-based wisdom from non-governmental organisations. It seems that political and media responses are to a greater extent provoked by the explicit nature of sexual images/content rather than by the gender inequality, sexism or misogyny inherent in content. Gill (2012) has noted how sexualisation discourses focus more on judgements relating to explicitness and exposure rather than on issues pertaining to equality and justice. Conspicuously less evident in the Irish discourse are analyses of inequality (e.g. asking why the 'moral panic' discourses are inevitably about girls), LGBT teenagers, the sexual inequity and (hetero)sexist 'pornification' of the wider (adult) society and subjective accounts from children and young people themselves about how they use and understand media products, images and discourses.

4. Trends in Ireland on the regulatory framework and education provision

This chapter outlines key trends and research findings on the regulatory and education frameworks that address the advertising and media content consumed by children in Irish society. The overarching European and international regulatory framework is briefly described as a backdrop to the detailed explication of the Irish regulatory and educational landscape in this field. The chapter's concluding discussion seeks to identify the important issues as they relate to the Irish context specifically. Indeed, commentators (Kehily and Swann, 2003; Buckingham, 2011) have argued that studying children's consumption is not only about looking at advertising, marketing and retail but is also about the many ways in which wider societal, commercial forces and market relations affect children's lives and experiences. Thus, below, we begin by providing a brief overview of the broader context of children's commercial and sexual relations.

4.1   Irish context

In the 'Celtic Tiger' years (1993-2007), the economic, social and cultural life of Ireland was radically transformed. Higher living standards, a significant reduction in unemployment, considerable economic growth, and Ireland as a destination for immigrants meant that the Irish 'Celtic Tiger' attracted much international attention (Kirby, 2010). While neoliberalism was not a significant ideological project in the Irish context, from 1997 onwards the Irish State embraced a neoliberal agenda of free market promotion, minimal regulation, privatisation of public services and low direct taxation (Kitchin *et al*, 2012). For example, privatisation was increasingly rolled out in a range of service areas, including school bus provision, foster and residential care, and in the use of public-private partnerships to build infrastructure, including new schools (Kitchin *et al*, 2012). Irish broadcasting and film-making became increasingly neoliberalised as Irish society and culture increasingly serviced the needs of the market (Flynn, 2002; Ging, 2002).

In 2008, as the Celtic Tiger unravelled and a global economic crisis was underway, Ireland was plunged into economic depression. Responding to the crisis has involved the privatisation of social assets, the collectivisation of private debt and severe cutbacks in State provision (Kitchin *et al*, 2012). A persistent negative feature and legacy of the Irish Celtic Tiger, with implications for families and children, were and are high levels of relative poverty and economic inequality (Kirby, 2002; Kitchin *et al*, 2012; Canavan, 2012). The form that Irish society took in the Celtic Tiger era has also been discursively constructed in a way which has portrayed the values and behaviours of *individuals* as excessive during the period, with much less attention given to the capitalist and other societal forces at work that grew and nurtured the Celtic Tiger (Linehan, 2015).

There is increasing diversity in Irish family structures, with one in three families departing from the traditional two-parent married couple (Lunn and Fahey, 2011). Families are smaller, with most women having one or two children, and there is an expectation on the part of the State that parents work outside the home. In Ireland, as in other jurisdictions, there has been a more proactive discourse, and a certain policy shift, towards greater recognition of children as rights-holders and as active citizens, with more entitlement to have a say in relation to decision-making in family and in other settings (Canavan, 2012). Globalisation, new technologies and commercialisation are all features of the current Irish cultural context in which children's sexualities are shaped and experienced. In 1998, sociologist Tom Inglis, writing about the new regime of sex in Ireland, referred to the proliferation of stories revealing past and present sexual abuses, as well as the pleasures that people experienced as they talked, read about and looked at sex. Sugrue (2002), focusing on the opening up of sex shops in Irish cities in the 1990s, noted the shifting grounds of sexual normality in a rapidly changing society. Significant changes in sexual attitudes and behaviours since the 1980s in Irish society have already been documented (Layte *et al*, 2006, p. 280), although differentiated sexual rights for particular groups of people and certain sexualities, including children's, continue to be perceived in problematic terms requiring intervention or else denied (Leane and Kiely,

2014). As noted in the literature review for this study (*see Chapter 2*), it is recognised in contemporary research that childhood does not exist outside of societal and market relations, and children's access to goods or sexual material is part of a bigger history of developing capitalist societies (Buckingham, 2011). Below, we delve further into what is known about children and advertising, television viewing, consumer spending and Internet use in Ireland.

4.2   Trends in Ireland

Advertising

The Nielsen Global Trust in Advertising Survey was conducted in August/September 2011 and it polled more than 28,000 consumers in 56 countries. It is based on the behaviour of respondents with online access only, with the sample weighted to reflect quotas based on age and sex of Internet consumers in each country. Findings by Nielsen (2012) revealed that the most trusted sources of advertising in Ireland were 'earned' media (96% Ireland, 89% EU), such as word of mouth or recommendations from family and friends. Editorial content, such as newspaper articles (66% Ireland), was the next most trusted source, followed by online consumer reviews (65% Ireland).

In relation to traditional advertising, Ireland's trust levels are slightly below the global average, with less than half of those surveyed indicating that they trust television advertisements (44%), newspaper advertisements (45%), magazine advertisements (45%), radio (45%) and outdoor advertising (41%). Of these forms of traditional advertising, only television is experiencing year-on-year growth in Ireland (+2% between 2010 and 2011).

In terms of emerging online forms of advertising, trust levels in Ireland are reportedly also lower when compared to the global average – 30% of Irish people surveyed trust advertisements on search engines, 24% trust advertisements on social networks (compared to 33% globally) and 22% trust advertisements on mobile phones. When it comes to purchasing decisions, television advertising continues to be the relatively most persuasive form of advertising in the Irish context, particularly for fast-moving consumer goods (49%), but Internet or online reviews can be more influential for certain products, such as electronics (48%) or entertainment (36%). Commenting on the results, Nielsen highlighted the increase in trust for online search and display advertising globally over the last few years and noted the potential for growth in trust in Ireland as digital advertising becomes more prevalent. Following the onset of the recession in 2008, as the overall advertising spend declined, the online advertising component of this spend continued to grow significantly (Power, 2014).

Television viewing

The *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) longitudinal study reports television watching as '*an almost universal activity*' (Williams *et al*, 2009, p. 20) among nine-year-olds, with only 2% reported by their mothers as not watching any TV on typical week nights during term time. The GUI research also shows that two-thirds of nine-year-olds usually watched between one and three hours of TV each evening, with 10% watching more than three hours, and furthermore that '*a total of 45% of nine-year-olds had a TV in their bedroom and 35% had a video/DVD player*' (Williams *et al*, 2009, p. 20). Children from lower income groups were more likely to have a television and or video/DVD player in their bedroom than those in the higher income quintile (*ibid*).

A UPC pan-European study (2007) revealed that Irish children spend more time watching television than their European counterparts (UPC, 2007). When asked if they allowed their under-five-year-old children to watch TV, almost eight in 10 parents surveyed (77%) agreed that they did and about one-third of parents of pre-schoolers (under-five year olds) reported that they allow their children to watch TV unaccompanied (RTÉ, 2011). On average, children

(aged 4-17 years) watched 134 minutes of television per day between 2008 and 2010. Most of this TV viewing happened between the hours of 6pm and 9pm, followed by 9pm until midnight (BAI, 2011). RTÉ surveys (2011) have found that in the 11-14 years age group, there are children who watch television after the 9pm watershed. On average, children watch Irish channels less than the others available to them (BAI, 2011) and spend more time watching television during the weekends than during weekdays (RTÉ, 2011). The TVR (Television Viewer Ratings)[12] for all advertising sectors for Irish channels viewed live reveals that the children TVR was the largest for food advertisements, followed by advertisements for entertainment and media, retail, and cosmetics and toiletries. Of the food advertisements viewed by children, prepared and convenience food had the largest share of TVR, followed by dairy products and substitutes, and then confectionery. Of the prepared and convenience food advertisements, the most viewed advertisements were for cereals, followed by baby foods, crisps and snacks. Danone Actimel was the most viewed food brand by children (aged 4-17 years) watching Irish TV channels between 2008 and 2010 (BAI, 2011).

The Irish Heart Foundation, the National Youth Council of Ireland and the Children's Rights Alliance reported in 2011 that 55% of Irish parents surveyed expressed support for a ban on the advertising of unhealthy foods before 9pm and that 20% of parents expressed support for a complete ban. A dedicated children's channel became available to Irish children in 2013 as part of RTÉ's Saorview programming line-up. It operates according to RTÉ's internal policy of not advertising during programming and is aimed at children under six. It was launched in April 2013 as a dedicated TV, radio and online service, as well as a new mobile app for up to seven-year-olds.

Consumption and spending

Surveys on spending on toys reveal that Irish parents spend more than their European counterparts and despite a reduction in spending on toys in 2008, since then it has been increasing annually and Christmas toy sales are particularly strong (Sheehan, 2012). The first-ever Toy Fair took place in Dublin in 2013 and of the top 10 toys predicted to dominate Christmas shopping lists in 2013, the most expensive was the Leap Pad Ultra, at a retail price of €167.99, and the least expensive was the Robo Fishbowl, at a retail price of €18.99 (McCárthaigh, 2013). 85% of tweens (8-14 year-olds) in Ireland surveyed by Starcom (a media planning and buying agency) claimed to have either the same or more pocket money in 2012 than in 2011 and the average weekly pocket money for this demographic was calculated at €8.06 (Brett, 2012). Expenditure by tweens was mainly on sweets, computer games, drinks, phone credit and clothing. Heavily marketed and advertised brands such as McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Facebook, Google, Apple and Cadbury were the 'most favoured', but Tayto and Disney also featured strongly for the younger segment of the demographic (*ibid*).

The Irish League of Credit Unions' (2015) Teens and Money Survey (1,000 responses) indicated that one in five teenagers reported receiving an increase in pocket money between 2013 and 2014, and that of the 74% of teens surveyed who receive their pocket money weekly, they received on average €13. Most of those surveyed reported using their pocket money on phones and technology.

The *Growing Up in Ireland* data for the 13-year-old child cohort group found that 13-year-olds whose mothers had the lowest level of education had on average €10.99 to spend weekly in comparison to an average of €7.54 for those 13-year-olds whose mothers had the highest levels of education. On average, 13-year-old girls were given more to spend than boys. A higher percentage of girls (54%) than boys (48%) got their spending money from doing chores (such

---

[12] TVR refers to TV ratings and is the measure of the average percentage of a target audience viewing a programme, day part (i.e. particular part of the day), commercial break or advertisement. An advertisement with a 'children' TVR of 20 means that, on average, 20% of all children watched it. It is the currency used when buying and selling airtime for advertisements (see BAI, 2011).

as babysitting), while a small percentage of 13-year-old boys (8%) and girls (4%) got their spending money from part-time work (Williams *et al*, 2012a).

According to data compiled by the EBS and reported in the Irish media, children in Ireland reportedly receive on average €455 on making their First Communion and €408 on average on making their Confirmation. The same source reveals that the average amount spent by parents on a child's First Communion is on the increase (from €479 in 2010 to €573 in 2013), and that the majority of children (67% in 2011, 70% in 2010) save most of the money received (Post Reporter, 2013). In 2013, it was reported that a survey by Ulster Bank found that Communicants on average received €521, which was an increase of 21% on the previous year, and that families spent on average €713 on the child's First Holy Communion event (Coffey, 2013). One in 10 children elected to save all their Communion money, while video games, toys and clothes were the most popular items bought by those children who spent their money (*ibid*). A research report from the 'Making Communion' project, which involved interviews with children aged seven and eight in school settings, indicated that among children's complicated conceptions of 'the good child' was one who saved and spent wisely (Kitching and Shanneik, 2015).

The effects of the economic recession on families with children in Ireland are evident in the *Growing Up in Ireland* data. When asked about their financial stability when their children were nine years, 7% of mothers reported experiencing difficulty making ends meet, but this figure had more than tripled to 23% when the families were re-interviewed four years later, when their children were aged 13 years (Williams *et al*, 2012b). Over two-thirds of families with five-year-olds stated that the recession had a 'significant' or 'very significant' effect on them and many reported that had cut back on basic items, including utility bills and rent (Williams *et al*, 2013). 61% of families with three-year-olds reported that they were under considerable financial strain (Williams *et al*, 2011a).

An introductory study by Valiulis *et al* (2007), conducted for the Equality Authority, set out to explore if restrictive gender stereotypes were being communicated to children in Ireland through the marketing and design of goods. (The study involved a literature review, visits to a small number of Dublin stores, an analysis of the *Late Late Christmas Toy Show* 2006 and an analysis of catalogues of products aimed at children.) It found significant evidence that gender stereotypes were being communicated in myriad ways, including in the language used; in the content, symbols and imagery; in the production techniques; and in the gendering of space in stores. The same study noted that the Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland (ASAI) had up to that time never received any complaints with regard to negative gender stereotyping in advertising directed at children. However, it had handled complaints pertaining to the positioning of Playboy merchandise in a catalogue in close proximity to products aimed at children. The study recommended that the Equality Authority should work with other stakeholders to address the study findings and to move towards reducing stereotypical notions of gender and promoting greater gender equality in Irish society.

Internet

Going online is an everyday occurrence for the majority of Irish children. With regard to computer use in the home, the *Growing Up in Ireland* data illuminate the extent and dynamics of such usage among nine-year-olds in Ireland. 89% of the nine-year-old children involved in the study said they had a computer in their home, with game play being the most frequent use cited by 86% of the nine-year-old cohort, followed by Internet surfing for fun and school projects (47%-48%), movies (28%) and homework (26%) (Williams *et al*, 2009).

The *Growing Up in Ireland* data have also raised safety issues on the basis that one-third of nine-year-olds report that they are permitted to go online without adult supervision and that 8% of nine-year-olds reported owning their own laptop or computer in the household. The installation of protective software was also found to be greater in households of higher social class and maternal education attainment than in other households (Williams *et al*, 2009).

Findings for Ireland in the *Net Children Go Mobile* survey, conducted in 2013,[13] reveal that the smartphone (mainly in the home in the privacy of bedrooms) is the most used device for accessing the Internet by 9-16 year-olds (35%), followed by laptops (29%) and tablets (27%) (O'Neill and Dinh, 2015). Activities relating to entertainment, followed by social networking, are still the most popular, while instant messaging is used by over one-third of 13-16 year-olds on a daily basis. 20% of children reported being bothered by something on the Internet in the past year, a figure which has doubled since the 2011 survey. Gender differences in access persist, since the previous survey showed that girls are more likely than boys to go online, whereas boys tend to favour game consoles. While bullying has not increased in Ireland since 2011 and remains close to the EU average, cyberbullying is more prevalent than face-to-face bullying and occurs most often on social networking sites. It is also the most harmful online risky experience reported and girls (26%) are also more likely to experience online bullying than boys (17%). Seeing sexual images online or offline had increased since 2011, but was below the EU average, and social networking sites emerged as the most common source of pornography, followed by video and television. 35% of girls (aged 13-16 years) reported experiencing harmful user-generated content in the form of hate messages, followed by anorexic/bulimic content, self-harm and sites discussing suicide or sites where people shared drug experiences. 40% of 11-12 year-olds have a social networking profile, despite the 'age 13' restriction for most social networking services.

Further findings from the *Net Children Go Mobile* survey (O'Neill and Dinh, 2015) show that the percentage of parents in Ireland who report mediating their children's Internet use (87%) is much higher than the EU average (77%), as is teacher support in Ireland across different types of mediation (89% in Ireland compared to 69% EU average). Ireland is also classified as one of the countries 'protected by restrictions' in the survey, indicating the scope that exists for more active forms of parent mediation in relation to Internet use, considering that greater and more diverse usage also facilitates skills development. Parent mediation is also more likely to be experienced by younger children and teenage girls rather than teenage boys. The survey found growing levels of Internet skills among young people, including safety skills, with smartphone users claiming to be more skilled than other categories of users.

The Internet Content Governance Advisory Group was set up in 2013 by the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources to look at issues relating to the Internet, including the opportunities and challenges it presents for children and young people. After taking public submissions, the Advisory Group made its recommendations in 2014 and further reference to these is made in Chapter 8 of this report.

Food, drink, alcohol and smoking consumption

Public health concerns that have been highlighted in relation to Irish children and identified in research studies include a low rate of breastfeeding and what are deemed inadequate weaning practices; increased numbers of overweight and obese children, leading to higher rates of related diseases; alcohol consumption; and the evident widespread consumption of high-calorie/high-fat snack foods among children. Between 2008 and 2010, an improvement in the percentage of children aged seven years in the normal weight category (77% and 82% respectively) was recorded; however, 18% of children aged seven years were classified as either overweight (14%) or obese (4%) in 2010 (DCYA, 2013). Findings from the *Growing Up in Ireland* data indicate that 25% of three-year olds; 5% of five-year-olds, 9% of nine-year-olds and 6% of 13-year-olds are overweight or obese (Williams *et al*, 2011b). Research published in 2005 revealed that 28% of parents in Ireland perceived food advertising to act as a barrier to providing a healthy diet for their child (Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance, 2005). While

---

[13] Face-to-face interview-based questionnaire with 500 9-16 year-olds in 2013 made up the quantitative component of the *Net Children Go Mobile* survey (O'Neill and Dinh, 2014 and 2015) and this was supplemented by qualitative interviews with 32 children and 10 parents of 9-16 year-olds.

food advertising was considered a relatively insignificant barrier in providing a healthy diet for children aged between 12 and 59 months, parents reported that it gained in significance as their children got older (Walton, undated).

While there are no vending machines in primary schools, post-primary schools are significant targets for this kind of commercial activity. A survey was administered to 741 post-primary school principals during the 2005 school year, designed to investigate the extent of marketing of foodstuffs and commercial sponsorship in school sites (Kelly *et al*, 2007). The 331 questionnaires returned revealed that one-third of schools were in receipt of commercial sponsorship, mainly to fund sports and IT equipment, and that the equipment sponsored sometimes contained logos (38.6%), corporate colours (9%) or slogans (2.1%). 51.3% of survey respondents (school principals) favoured the restriction of sponsorship in schools, while 19.5% reported that they would welcome more sponsorship of school activities. Sponsorship of vending machines was reported by 13% of the schools surveyed, but the presence of vending machines in schools dispensing drinks and snacks was much higher, at 45% and 28% respectively. The survey findings illustrated that healthy eating policies and the availability of nutritious foods in Irish post-primary schools are actions undermined by the widespread availability of confectionery, soft drinks, salty snacks and biscuits on the school site and from outlets (shops and fast food outlets) situated close to schools. Findings also indicated that decisions relating to commercial sponsorship typically did not involve students or parents, as they were made predominantly by principals or by principals in consultation with teaching staff and by school boards of management. Principals surveyed responded positively to a number of different measures suggested, with as many as 92.1% in favour of a national code of practice in relation to the provision and content of vending machines in post-primary schools and 87.3% in favour of the development of a national code of practice in relation to industry sponsorship and funding of activities in schools and communities.

While acknowledging at the time that the amount of in-school marketing was relatively small, when compared with contexts like the USA, the authors of the survey, Kelly *et al* (2007), recommended the introduction of a tracking mechanism to monitor over time the changes in marketing, advertising and commercial sponsorship in schools. They also recommended formal policy development to inform school practices in this area and they called for the recommendations of the National Taskforce on Obesity (2005) specific to schools to be implemented without delay. In 2013, the granting of permission to a global fast food chain to open a 'drive-thru' restaurant close to primary and secondary schools in Co Meath generated controversy as to which was more important – the development of a town and employment opportunities or the reduced availability of less healthy foods to children.

Relevant to the Irish context are the findings of an English-language systematic review conducted into the impact of initiatives to limit the advertising of food and beverage products to children (Galbraith-Enami and Lobstein, 2013). Statutory regulation was found to show effectiveness, but tended to be too limited in scope to cover the full gamut of opportunities for marketing to children. Acknowledging the self-regulatory pledges made by some food and beverage companies to limit their marketing activities, their impact was found to be minimal for a number of reasons, which included the narrow range of media covered and inadequate enforcement. Industry-sponsored research reports (as distinct from other research sources) showed significant improvement in the reduction of children's exposure to food and drink advertising. The authors found that reducing children's exposure to unhealthy products is possible, but they recommended more comprehensive statutory measures with close monitoring to ensure compliance and effective sanctions for non-compliance. They also sought government-led definitions of the media to be covered, the products to be controlled and the audience to be protected.

The early onset of alcohol use among some children and the relatively high number of children and young people who engage in frequent risky and heavy alcohol use in their teenage and early adult lives has generated concern for some time in Ireland (Hibell *et al*, 2012). However,

there exists some doubt that the measures introduced are robust enough to address the problems or that other options proven to be more effective have not been adopted. In 2009, research undertaken by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) engaged young people and young adults in a mapping exercise to explore their exposure to alcohol advertising and marketing on a daily basis, and its appeal for them. A key finding was that despite the restrictions on alcohol advertising and marketing that exist in Ireland, 16 different channels of communication were identified by the young people that exposed them to alcohol advertising and marketing on a regular basis. Television advertising, promotional flyers and online advertising featured prominently. The young people also identified advertisements that they found to be most appealing because they were funny, clever, attractive, cool or eye-catching, or because they promoted cheap products or special offers (NYCI, 2009). The findings were used to challenge claims by the drinks industry in Ireland that it does not target children and young people in their marketing strategies. They were also used to highlight that existing measures, such as the pre-vetting system for alcohol advertising and the audience profiling for the placement of alcohol advertisements on broadcast media, do not go far enough to address the risk posed by young people's exposure to marketing practices promoting alcohol in the Irish context.

Alcohol Action Ireland, a campaigning organisation against alcohol-related harm, made a submission in January 2014 to the Advertising Standards for Ireland Review of its Code of Standards for Advertising (Alcohol Action Ireland, 2014). It lamented the absence of statutory regulation of alcohol marketing. It highlighted, from its perspective, a number of problems with the Code as it currently operates to reduce alcohol exposure. It called for alcohol advertisements not to be broadcast on TV and radio when the child audience profile is 10%, rather than 25%, as it is currently. It called for a strengthening of the Code to address digital marketing of alcohol and to cover experiential marketing events such as 'Arthur's Day', as well as heritage advertisements. It also called for clearer definitions of some concepts of the Code, in order to better determine whether an advertisement might be in violation of it. It sought more significant sanctions for non-compliance with the Code and a more timely response to complaints made.

A Public Health Bill is one part of a wider suite of measures being taken by Government to respond to the harmful use of alcohol, such as raising the minimum price of the cheapest alcohol products, requiring more detailed labelling and health warnings on alcohol products, and placing more significant limits on the advertising and marketing of alcohol.

4.3   EU and international regulatory context

The European Commission, among other European and international institutions (e.g. International Chamber of Commerce, European Advertising Standards Alliance), plays a key role in influencing the regulatory regimes of Ireland and other Member States. EC Directives require action on the part of Member States to transpose specified requirements into national law. At the end of November 2007, the European Parliament adopted the *Audiovisual Media Services* (AMS) Directive, which includes digital and Internet-based audiovisual services and advertisements. This updated the *Television Without Frontiers* Directive (97/36/EC), which up until then provided the centrepiece of advertising regulation in the EU (EASA, 2013). The first report on the application of the 2010 Directive emphasised its effectiveness, but also highlighted the need to strengthen the rules protecting children, particularly where the advertising was of foods high in fat, salt or sugar targeting children. A content analysis of advertising spots revealed that the Directive's provisions on the protection of minors in advertising were seldom contravened, but it also identified significant challenges in relation to data protection and control of advertising in the transition to connected TV services. The *Unfair Commercial Practices* (UPC) Directive (2005) sets the maximum rules for the protection of consumers from misleading advertising and aggressive or unfair commercial practices (EASA, 2013). There are EU Directives on advertising, broadcasting, consumer protection, direct marketing, food advertising and labelling, pharmaceutical advertising, tobacco advertising, privacy and data protection (EASA, 2013). In addition, there is an EU Regulation on cosmetics and recommendations on alcohol advertising.

A number of Articles in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which has been ratified in Ireland, refer to children and the media. Highlighting the dual considerations of a child's right to information and a child's right to protection, it notes that it is '*the best interests of the child*' that should prevail. In 2012, UNICEF produced a document entitled *Children's Rights and Business Principles*, which set out 10 principles to be observed by businesses so that children's rights could be respected. The *Consolidated Code of Advertising and Marketing Communication Practice* issued by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) in 2006 covers advertising to children and it provides the key reference point for all the self-regulatory agencies developing their own codes of practice in national contexts.

The European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA) coordinates national self-regulatory organisations, provides a cross-border complaint resolution system in the EU single market and seeks to exchange and promote best practice in the area of advertising self-regulation. The EASA (2013) statistics recorded a very low level of complaints in relation to advertising to children (2.54% in 2008), but acknowledged that advertising to children was very high on the EU political agenda and that of some individual countries. In October 2008, EASA published best practice guidance with regard to digital marketing communications for national self-regulatory organisations. Between 2008 and 2010, the number of EU countries with a self-regulatory authority dealing with digital marketing communications increased from eight to 19. The number of complaints relating to Internet advertising, recorded by EASA (2013), increased from 1% in 1999 to 13% in 2008 and this is in keeping with the increased advertising spend on new media in the European market.

'Promoting change of gender roles and stereotypes' is a key objective outlined in *A Road Map for Equality between Women and Men, 2006-2010*, produced by the European Council's Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs. It makes recommendations on the portrayal of gender in advertising and the media. In 2012, a Polish Conservative Member of the European Parliament and a member of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality called for action to curb the early sexualisation of children. The draft report recommended a range of actions at EU and national levels to address the sexualisation issue, and such countries as France and the UK were identified as setting the example in terms of the promotion of good standards and practices in this area.

Following the creation of an industry coalition established by the European Commission at the end of 2011 to promote a safer Internet for children, the Commission released its *New Strategy for Safer Internet and Better Internet Content for Children and Teenagers in 2012*. This sought to harmonise protections across Member States for children using online services. It sought to promote the same level of safety for children in relation to online advertising as that afforded to children in relation to other audiovisual services. In the strategy, it reported its plan to propose a pan-European framework for electronic authentication enabling the use of personal attributes (age in particular) to ensure compliance with age provisions in data protection legislation. It also promised support for benchmarking and testing of parental control tools and relevant support services for different kinds of content, including user-generated content.

The OECD also adopted a recommendation to Member States' governments calling for enhanced protection for children online in 2012. At country level, Member States were encouraged to formulate clear policy objectives involving different stakeholders in order to progress a dialogue on effective regulation, to raise awareness and provide education initiatives for parents and children, as well as to develop technologies required to protect children. Governments were also encouraged at international level to strengthen international networks of organisations dedicated to the protection of children online, to share information about national policy approaches and effective educational and awareness-raising tools, and to work towards better coordination at regional and international levels. This recommendation and its implementation will be reviewed within a five-year period and a report will be made to the OECD.

The Safer Internet Programme, created in 1999, operates throughout the European Commission and its 2009–2013 programme has a budget of €55 million (Béjot, 2013). Part of this programme also involves the establishment of safer Internet centres in the different European countries and these organise 'Safer Internet Day', a worldwide initiative taken under this programme. The European Parliament adopted, with a large majority in November 2012, a Resolution on the protection of children in a digital world. The Resolution suggests that the protection of children requires a comprehensive legal framework, the development of self-regulation and the provision of education (Béjot, 2013). The European Parliament noted that an agreement signed in 2009 and made between the EU Commission and 17 social network sites promoting the protection and security of minors online was not complied with. Most social networking sites were failing to ensure that minors' profiles are accessible only to their approved contacts by default and they were urged to remedy this in a revised self-regulatory framework. The European Parliament welcomed new proposals affording better personal data protection, but it called on owners and administrators of web pages to set out in a clear and visible way their data protection policy and to provide for a system of mandatory parental consent for the processing of data of children under the age of 13 years. A range of commitments made by industry to the European Commission were to be increasingly deployed throughout 2013 as a new benchmark for child protection online was set. These included the presence of parental control tools and screens on all devices, as well as easy-to-use and more sophisticated tools to make reports about harmful content and contact, and to track the progress of reports made. Increasing awareness among parents of safety controls was also promised. Industry commitments on technology tools to promote wider use of content classification were received and best practice on age-appropriate privacy settings had also been developed (Béjot, 2013).

The World Health Organization (2012) identified an overall policy objective for countries of reducing children's exposure to marketing of foods high in saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, free sugars or salt. Its guidelines in terms of how countries should seek to fulfil this objective have more recently emphasised statutory provisions over self-regulation on the grounds that gaining agreement across industry groups and sectors in this field poses significant challenges.

4.4   Advertising standards

The Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland (ASAI) is an independent self-regulatory body, set up in 1981 and financed by the advertising industry '*to promote and enforce the highest standards of marketing communications*'. It is also a member of the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA). The sixth edition of the Manual of Advertising Self-Regulation with the **Code of Standards for Advertising, Promotional and Direct Marketing** came into force in Ireland on 1 January 2007 (ASAI, 2007). Section 5 of the Manual sets out the obligations as they specifically relate to children: 'a child' is any person aged under 18 years and the primary responsibility of parents/guardians for children is acknowledged. The special characteristics of children, with reference to factors such as their age, experience and context, are highlighted in terms of acknowledging how they receive and react to marketing communications. Section 5 also states that the ASAI will take into account such factors as age, experience and context when assessing marketing communications.

Other subsections of the Code require that children are not put in physical or moral danger by marketing communications[14] and that their loyalty, credulity, vulnerability or lack of experience is not exploited.[15] Furthermore, the relevant section of the Code demands that marketing

---

[14]   For example, it is stated that children should not be portrayed in ways that offend against standards of good taste and decency; that they should not be encouraged to enter unsafe places, strange places or engage with strangers (e.g. collecting coupons or wrappers, etc); that they should not be shown engaging in dangerous situations or in anti-social behaviour or in close proximity to dangerous substances or equipment without direct adult supervision.

[15]   For example, it is stated that parental responsibility should not be undermined by marketing communications or that such communications should not make children feel that they might be unpopular for not buying a product.

communications do not feature products unsuitable for children, should not exaggerate their characteristics, should not require children to disclose personal information and should not minimise the price of a product by choosing particular words (e.g. 'only' €10). A separate subsection is concerned with food and beverages, stating that children should not be misled about the benefits of consumption, or that a healthy lifestyle should not be denigrated by marketing communications. Another subsection deals specifically with marketing promotions and it is stated that products unsuitable for children should not be offered to them, that the value of prizes or the prospects of winning competitions should not be exaggerated, and that children's susceptibility to charitable appeals should not be exploited.

The ASAI provides advice on whether a proposed marketing communication or sales promotion conforms to the Code of Standards. Case reports on complaints made and investigated by the ASAI are released in periodic Complaints Bulletins. Complaints made about marketing communications appearing in foreign media are not covered by the Code, but are forwarded to the relevant national self-regulatory body for investigation. When a complaint is withheld, a range of enforcement strategies and sanctions are available to the ASAI, including the compulsory withdrawal or amendment of the communication, a fine or suspension of membership.

A review of the ASAI's Complaints Bulletins for the period January 2012 to March 2013 was undertaken for this study (*see Appendix 10*). Using 'children', 'child' and 'young person' as search terms, the Research Team searched for complaints relating to children under the relevant section of the Code (i.e. Section 5). This search identified complaints (sometimes more than one) relating to 14 advertisements, of which eight were deemed by the Research Team to be relevant to this research and two of which could not be accessed online. More complaints were not upheld than upheld, on the grounds that they were found not to be in contravention of the relevant section of the Code. While the majority of complaints made related to commercial advertising and marketing, a small number related to charity events and advertising, although these were not upheld. A number of complaints upheld related to a Club Orange 'Best Bits' outdoor advertising campaign, which also generated an amount of public controversy. A few parts of an integrated marketing telecommunications campaign called 'Go Conquer' were upheld on the basis that they were considered distasteful and unnecessarily overtly sexual. A complaint pertaining to advertising by a fast food outlet was upheld for conveying a negative message to children about food preparation. Overall, the small number of complaints pertaining to children should be noted, as well as the smaller number upheld. A more detailed summary of the complaints is presented in Appendix 10.

Prior to 2009, the digital remit of the ASAI Code of Standards for Advertising, Promotional and Direct Marketing was very limited. Following the receipt of complaints about marketing communications on advertisers' websites, its digital remit was extended to cover such sites. In 2012, the ASAI released a consultation document on the further proposed extension of its remit in relation to additional digital media, such as social media platforms, which up until then were outside the remit of the Code. In November 2012, the ASAI announced the further extension of its digital remit to include advertisers' profile pages and other non-paid-for space online under advertisers' control.[16] In 2014, new provisions were introduced in Section 7 of the Code of Standards requiring that alcohol marketing communications not be directed at children or encourage them to start drinking alcohol, or that advertisers not refer to or use identifiable heroes or heroines of young people.

---

[16]   The Code now applies to marketing communications carried on electronic storage materials and all other electronic media and computer systems, including but not limited to: online advertisements in paid-for space (including banner or pop-up advertisements and online video advertisements); paid-for search listing; preferential listings on price comparison sites; viral advertisements; in-game advertisements; commercial classified advertisements; advergames that feature in display advertisements; advertisements transmitted by Bluetooth; advertisements distributed through web widgets; and online sales promotions and prize promotions. The Code also applies to marketing communications in non-paid-for space online under the control of the advertiser or their agent, including but not limited to advertisers' own websites (ASAI, 2012).

In October 2013, the ASAI announced the commencement of a review of the Code of Standards, involving an extensive period of public consultation, and it is expected that in due course an amended code will be introduced. Two submissions to the consultation process were accessed by the Research Team for this study. One submission from the Irish Medical Organisation is seeking more extensive legislative bans on the advertising of high-fat, salt and sugar foods and alcohol on the grounds of protecting children. Another submission relevant to this research was made by the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI, 2013), which called on the ASAI to use the Code to do more to promote gender equality in advertising. The NWCI looked for greater clarity as to how compliance with the Code '*on the basis of the standards of taste, decency and propriety generally accepted in Ireland*' is assessed and reviewed, arguing that this clearer understanding would be of use to groups such as the NWCI, which is concerned with promoting greater gender equality in society. A section of the NWCI's submission entitled 'Pornography and Exploitation' called for stronger action on unsolicited pornographic material advertised online and for directives against incitement to hatred of women to prohibit images promoting products depicting crimes against women. It called for directives against sex stereotyping and exploitation of men or women in alcohol advertising and promotional activities. In relation to slimming and beauty products, the ASAI was asked to review the Code to ensure that marketing communications do not exaggerate social benefit, on the grounds of pressures on young women relating to advertising and body image. Ensuring that advertisers refrain from the use of 'rating systems' and 'winner/loser' dichotomies was also encouraged, on the basis of concerns raised by online bullying and image rating (NWCI, 2013).

4.5 Retail and appropriate children's wear

In 2012, **Retail Ireland Childrenswear Guidelines** (applying to children under 12 years) were introduced for the first time following an invitation by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Retail Ireland, 2011). These voluntary guidelines were aimed at ensuring that clothing design and marketing of clothing does not unduly gender stereotype or sexualise children, and were closely aligned with the British Retail Consortium Guidelines. The Irish guidelines cover such issues as requiring that slogans and imagery are age-appropriate; that fabrics and cut should provide for modesty; that colours should be age-appropriate and suitable for the item of clothing; and that retailers should take great care where the design of underwear is concerned. Swimwear, the Guidelines state, should provide for modesty and should be age-appropriate. Footwear designed for everyday use should provide stability, and 'party shoes' in their decoration should be 'pretty' rather than 'adult' and not be of excessive heel heights. Signatories to the Guidelines when they were introduced included Arnotts, Brown Thomas, Clerys, Debenhams, House of Fraser, Marks & Spencer, Next, Penneys, Tesco and T.K. Maxx.

Parents wishing to make a complaint about children's wear are advised in the Guidelines to complain in the first instance to the relevant store manager, but Retail Ireland has also put in place a central e-mail address to facilitate the reporting of complaints. Complaints are being compiled on a quarterly basis and provided to the Retail Ireland Secretariat. Retail Ireland undertook to monitor progress and to provide an annual report to DCYA. Progress and other issues pertaining to these guidelines are a focus of discussion in Chapter 8.

Comparisons were made between child beauty pageants and Irish dancing competitions when the first child beauty pageant was held in Ireland in 2013 (*see Appendix 9*). The Irish Dancing Commission, which already had a rule prohibiting the wearing of make-up for beginners under the age of 12 years, introduced additional regulations for dancers in solo and team competitions, which became operational from 1 March 2014 (Flaherty, 2014). These regulations ban the wearing of facial make-up and false eyelashes for Irish dancers under 10 years of age. They do not ban wigs or the wearing of fake tan on limbs. But artificial carriage aids designed to keep dancers' posture perfect are also banned under the new regulations. In commenting on the introduction of the new regulations, a spokesperson for the Irish Dancing Commission reported that the banning of false eyelashes was a precautionary measure and that there had been very little opposition from parents to the new rules.

4.6 Broadcasting Authority of Ireland – Children's Commercial Communications Code

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) is an independent statutory organisation responsible for the activities of television and radio services in Ireland. Its work is guided by the Broadcasting Act, 2009. Operational since 2 May 2011, the BAI's **Children's Commercial Communications Code** relates to commercial communications that promote products, services or activities that are deemed to be of particular interest to children and/or are broadcast during and between children's programmes. The Code seeks to protect children from inappropriate advertising, teleshopping, sponsorship, product placement and other forms of commercial promotion. It aims to ensure that commercial communications do not exploit the particular susceptibilities of children, are fair and do not exaggerate the characteristics of products. While product placement is permitted on Irish television broadcasting with appropriate viewer notification, it is not permitted on children's programming. The purpose of the Code is also to provide broadcasters, parents, guardians and others with a clear set of standards in terms of what is expected from commercial communications on Irish broadcasting services.

Sexualisation of children is specifically addressed in the Code, which states that '*children's commercial communications shall not portray a child in a sexually provocative manner or provoke anxiety in children over their bodily appearance*' (BAI, 2011, p. 11). The Code only applies to broadcasters within the jurisdiction of the Republic of Ireland and the BAI does not provide broadcasters or others with a copy clearance service. For the purpose of the Code, 'a child' refers to any person under 18 years of age, but there are particular stipulations for particular age groups based on the different levels of protection deemed appropriate. The Code operates according to audience profiling, so, for example, a programme is only considered a 'children's programme' if the percentage of under-18s viewing it is 50% or over. Programmes scheduled after 9pm are not considered children's programmes. (Section 11 of the BAI's Children's Commercial Communications Code relates to the rules on diet and nutrition, and this is discussed further in Section 4.7 below.) Viewers or listeners are advised to make complaints that they think breach the Code to the relevant broadcaster, but the complaints process is outlined on the BAI's website and a telephone number for making a complaint is also provided. Decisions on broadcasting complaints are reported on a regular basis and are accessible online.

A review of complaints made to the BAI's Complaint Forum for the period September 2011 to February 2013 was conducted for the purpose of this study (*see Appendix 11*). The review revealed 13 complaints, only one of which was found to be in breach of standards. This related to mention of a curse word on a vox pop on an early evening radio programme. The Complaint Forum found that the programme did not comply with Sections 2.2 (due care) and 3.3.1 (coarse and offensive language) of the Code of Programme Standards.

The watershed requires that programmes aired before 9pm should not contain material deemed unsuitable for children. It was considered to be well maintained in a media analysis of sexual content across the Irish television landscape (MacKeogh, 2004). The analysis revealed that implied sexual intercourse or sexual innuendo was evident in programmes aired in the afternoon and early evening slots, but that there were no instances of strong sex depicted before 9pm.

This was borne out by focus group research conducted by MacKeogh (2004) with 76 adolescents, aged 15-19 years, which revealed that young people thought sex was more pervasive on television, which was reflective of a more sexualised society, but it was not so explicit, except in late-night programmes and on programmes on satellite channels. The research also revealed that references to sexual risk and responsibility (e.g. crisis pregnancy, safe sex) had increased in programmes, but that the potential of television media in this regard was not really exploited (only 12% of programmes were found to have some kind of reference

to risks and responsibilities). The use of television media as a resource in formal sex education also did not really happen in the Irish context, and while those interviewed demonstrated their sophistication in terms of critically analysing and being very sceptical of some programme genres, their critical skills were less in evidence where documentaries or more factual information programmes which included sexual content were concerned. Young people also demonstrated much less awareness of how media used sex to position them as consumers.

Ging's (2005) research[17] with young teenage boys found them to be active and sophisticated media consumers. However, she found little evidence of their consumption, or at least their public performance of their media usage, challenging hegemonic masculinity or of media's ability to challenge stereotypical concepts of masculinity.

The BAI's *Draft Strategy Statement, 2014-2016* recognises the challenges being generated by the changing media landscape and undertakes to collaborate with new players in the media environment on a self-regulatory basis towards developing appropriate standards.

4.7 Regulation of food and beverages advertising

The regulatory landscape with regard to food and beverages has changed significantly in Ireland, and indeed in Europe, since 2000. Ireland, along with England and France, moved towards statutory regulation in this area more quickly than many other European countries, where the emphasis was predominantly on self-regulation but with statutory regulation considered a feasible option in the event of failing self-regulation (Hawkes *et al*, 2011). By 2005, with the introduction of the Children's Code of Advertising in Ireland, the use of celebrities in children's food advertising (unless as part of a healthy eating campaign) was already banned and warnings or on-screen messages on fast food and confectionery advertisements were required. A review of this Code in 2008 revealed a high level of stakeholder dissatisfaction with the diet and nutrition rules in the Code, on very conflicting grounds – that the rules were too weak according to children's rights organisations or too strong according to industry stakeholders.

Section 42 of the Broadcasting Act, 2009 required the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) '*to prohibit the advertising in a broadcasting service of a particular class or classes of foods and beverages considered by the Authority to be the subject of public concern in respect of the general public health interests of children, in particular those which contain fat, trans-fatty acids, salts or sugars*'. The BAI convened an Expert Working Group to examine health concerns of children in Ireland and to determine if the promotion of certain foods and drinks would be restricted, and if so, in what particular ways.

The Expert Group (BAI, 2011) recommended that the BAI adopt without amendment the Food Safety Authority's Nutrient Profiling (NP) model operating for broadcasting purposes in the UK and that no exemption would be made for cheese (identified as an 'exceptional' case for the reason that its consumption should be limited in over-five-year-olds because, while it is a valuable and concentrated source of calcium, it is also rich in fat). The Expert Group also recommended that consideration should be given to advertising of food and drinks for children, particularly younger children, which is targeted at primary carers. In addition, it recommended that research surveys should be undertaken to ensure that rates of trans-fats consumption in Ireland remain low. Trans-fats are not included in the NP model and it was considered impractical in the Irish context to regulate advertising of foods high in such fats (BAI, 2011).

---

[17] This study involved quantitative research conducted with 187 Transition Year students from nine different secondary schools and seven focus group discussions with a sample of the same students. Data collection was carried out during 2002 and 2003.

In October 2012, the BAI published a revised **Children's Commercial Communications Code**, following public consultation. The key amendment to the Code was the exemption of cheese from the NP model, which was adopted. The rules came into effect in 2013 amid some concern from advertisers, the food and drinks industry and RTÉ that a UK model of nutrient profiling was used to determine the products high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS); that the television advertising spend as a result of the Code would fall; and that the definition of children as being under 18 years was too restrictive (Devane, 2013). Concern about the high rate of obesity in the child and adult populations in Ireland continues to keep the issue of food and drinks advertising and marketing, particularly as it relates to children, high on the political agenda.

While the different stakeholders are in favour of a partnership approach to the problem, they tend to demonstrate little by way of agreement on what kinds of measures or interventions should be pursued in the Irish context to address the problem. Industry stakeholders argue that the steps taken by the industry in relation to food advertising and marketing to children, its high level of compliance with existing guidelines and its own internal codes of practice indicate that it is living up to its social responsibilities and showing leadership in this area. In contrast, the Irish Heart Foundation and the Special Action Group on Obesity (SAGO) argue that a further combination of measures, directed at powerful environmental forces and not just focused on parents and children, are needed to deal more urgently with this public health concern (Joint Committee on Health and Children, 2012). Indeed, the Irish Medical Organisation (IMO) in its submission to the ASAI's review of the Code of Standards for Advertising, Promotional and Direct Marketing in January 2014 (*see Section 4.4*) called for an outright broadcasting ban on HFSS foods between 6am and 9pm, enforced by statute. It was stated that these measures would help to positively influence children's food preferences and food requests, and provide further support for families to purchase healthy options.

A 2008 study involving content analysis across four popular UK channels (CBBC, CBeebies, CiTV, Five) in the British context found few instances of HFSS foods evident in marketing communications around children's programmes, suggesting that the British regulations, introduced in 2007, are successful (Oates and Newman, 2010). However, it did find that the gap left by the removal of advertisements for unhealthy foods had not been filled by advertisements for healthy foods. It also highlighted the importance of focusing on children's television programmes and related content, and not just on advertising, when investigating children's food exposure. Concern has also been raised about the effects of messages about food on programmes and the eating habits of television characters (e.g. Peppa Pig), which are operating without children's conscious awareness or control (Nairn and Fine, 2008; Bramhill, 2013).

In the context of the USA, where food advertising targeting children has also been subjected to more regulation in recent years, the Federal Trade Commission report (Bachman, 2012) found a decline in spending on food advertising targeting children generally, but also a shift away from television advertising towards greater use of new media and increased use of integrated marketing strategies. It was reported that there were '*modest nutritional improvements*' in the nutritional profile of food marketed to children. Another US study by Cheyne *et al* (2013) lends credence to the claim that the shift to online advertising is occurring. In their study, which involved the coding and analysis of the content of 17 branded cereal websites identified as targeting children, they found that cereal marketers were reaching children online with lengthier and more sophisticated engagements than were possible in traditional media, and they were almost exclusively promoting their high-sugar cereal products. While industry interests argued that they were now doing enough to help address the problem of childhood obesity, others highlighted food packaging and toy giveaways as significant contributors to the problem, which they claim are also not being adequately addressed (Bachman, 2012). Buckingham (2011) argues that the links between food consumption and public health are too complex, leading him to claim that measures such as food advertising bans targeting children are unlikely to make any real difference when social inequalities, the political economy of food production and distribution and food cultures are so neglected in much of the research and analyses of the problem.

4.8   Regulation of alcoholic drinks advertising

Although alcoholic drinks can be advertised on most media in Ireland (with the exception of spirits and ready-to-drink beverages, such as alcopops, which may not be advertised on broadcast media), advertising of alcoholic drinks has been subjected to tighter regulation than other sectors under a number of different industry codes of practice (Lambkin, 2010). An initiative taken by the Department of Health and Children with the main stakeholders in 2002 resulted in the ***Alcohol Marketing, Communications and Sponsorship Codes of Practice***, which came into effect in 2004. These co-regulatory codes seek to limit the exposure of under-18s to alcohol advertising and they also cover sponsorship of music and sporting events and activities surrounding these events. They apply to TV, radio, cinema, outdoor sites, print and digital media, with specific codes for each of these different sites. The Alcohol Marketing Communications Monitoring Body (AMCMB) monitors complaints and the Central Copy Clearance Ireland (CCCI),[18] initiated in 2003, provides a pre-vetting service for each piece of advertising for alcoholic beverages due to be used in Ireland, whether Irish-made or not. Advertisements have to comply with the ASAI's Self-Regulatory Code of Practice and the BAI's regulations, and if they comply, they carry the CCCI publication certificate and approval number, without which they cannot be displayed. This pre-vetting service is credited for making a positive contribution to alcohol advertising content and for reducing the number of complaints about alcohol advertising since 2003 (AMCMB, 2010; Lambkin, 2010).

In 2008, mixed trade outlets (convenience stores and supermarkets), in cooperation with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, agreed a **Co-regulatory Code of Practice**. This required that they confine alcohol products to one part of the store only and, in as far as is practicable, not in an area people have to walk through to access other products. In-store advertising has to be confined to this location and the Code requires that it does not glamorise alcohol consumption or enhance its appeal to minors. Only staff over 18 years of age who are adequately trained and informed of the law can sell alcohol and the Code also demands that alcohol not be purchased at self-service tills or on a pay-on-delivery basis. People who appear to be under 21 years of age have to be asked for identification (e.g. Garda identification card) if they are purchasing alcohol.

In its Annual Reports for 2010 and 2011, AMCMB reported a high rate of compliance with the codes and only a few breaches, which when identified were addressed and action taken to prevent their re-occurrence. However, according to Lambkin (2010), problems arising in relation to approval at pre-vetting stage have mainly centred on the ready-to-drink category, such as alcopops (with a lower 75% approval) because it is a particularly 'sensitive sector' due to the perception that it is particularly targeted at young people. CCI's Annual Report for 2013 indicated that Internet-based advertising has become the number one media channel since 2011, accounting for 39.7% of all Irish-produced advertisements for alcohol and 28.4% of those from overseas sources in 2013. Other key advertising channels include outdoor media (26.3% Irish and 31.5% overseas), press and magazine advertising (12.4% Irish and 12% overseas) and television (6.4% Irish-produced and 21.6% overseas).

The Alcohol Beverage Federation of Ireland (ABFI) commenced work on a set of ***Best Practice Principles for Ireland's Digital Media*** in 2012 and these were adopted in 2013. The principles are designed to enable the industry to exploit digital marketing opportunities, but in so doing, to ensure that under-18 year-olds are not directly exposed to alcohol advertising (ABFI, 2013). Overall, the ABFI is a strong advocate of self-regulatory and co-regulatory measures, and a strong opponent of more restrictive measures (such as blanket bans on alcohol advertising and sponsorship, raising prices or reduced availability of alcohol).

---

[18]   The CCCI Board has nine members – four nominated by the Association of Advertisers in Ireland, four by the Institute of Advertising Practitioners in Ireland and an independent chairperson.

Phoenix (2011), drawing on systematic reviews and a number of other studies, observed that the evidence did offer strong support of the impact of alcohol advertising on young people's intent to use and actual use of alcohol, and that studies also revealed significant levels of exposure among young people to alcohol advertising. Yet, she also highlighted many limitations in relation to the studies conducted and noted that advertising is not the only factor that is significant in influencing alcohol consumption or making it desirable.

As with HFSS foods (*see Section 4.7*), the Irish Medical Organisation (IMO) in its submission to the ASAI's review of the Code of Standards for Advertising, Promotional and Direct Marketing in January 2014 called for a total ban on all alcohol advertising and promotional activity in Irish society, citing as evidence for this the failure to protect children and young people from alcohol advertising.

4.9   Regulation of tobacco advertising

In the Republic of Ireland in 2010, 11.9% of children aged 10-17 were current smokers (McAvoy *et al*, 2013). The statistic that more women in Ireland are dying from lung cancer than breast cancer (NCRI, 2011) provided the motivation for the National Women's Council of Ireland and the Irish Cancer Society to take on this issue. It has been acknowledged that despite significant legislative measures designed to reduce smoking in Ireland and to impose significant restrictions on the tobacco industry,[19] smoking is still a significant problem. A joint report by the Irish Cancer Society and the National Women's Council of Ireland (2012) showed that 27% of women in Ireland smoke, but there are higher rates among the 18-29 age group and among young women in the lower socio-economic groups, where over 50% of women smoke.

As a result, the organisations behind this campaign called for, as part of a range of different measures, the introduction of generic or plain packaging for cigarettes, as had been introduced in Australia. It was argued that tobacco companies are constantly finding new ways to market a product that is known to be addictive by introducing new flavours, new filter technologies, new blends and new packaging designed to appeal to particular segments of the market (*ibid*). It noted the research findings in Ireland, indicating that new and attractive packaging, which is coloured in particular ways and marketed as more feminine and elegant and perceived as such, does have an impact, with female research participants indicating that they are more interested and motivated to buy cigarettes that are newly branded or packaged in attractive ways when they hear about them from others (*ibid*). The campaign pointed to the evidence to indicate that the marketing of particular brands in terms of being 'less harmful' than others (e.g. superslim/low-tar products) influences women's decisions to buy these brands. Apart from calls to introduce generic packaging, the Irish Cancer Society and the National Women's Council of Ireland (2012) campaign also called for restrictions in cigarette modifications and the banning of positive media images of women smoking.

In 2015, the Irish Government became the first in Europe and the second in the world to pass legislation requiring standardised packaging for tobacco products, and it is expected that the plain packs of cigarettes will be in shops from 2017 onwards. The Government in 2013 also introduced its revised policy on tobacco control, entitled *Tobacco Free Ireland*, which set a target of a tobacco-free Ireland in 2025, meaning a smoking prevalence rate of less than 5% of the population (Tobacco Policy Review Group, 2013). The protection of children from smoking is to be prioritised in all initiatives and through a combination of legislation and tobacco-free environments (school and third-level campuses, sports campuses, playgrounds, beaches, parks), it is intended that tobacco use will be denormalised in Irish society.

---

[19]   In 2004, Ireland introduced by legislation a ban on smoking in all workplaces, with a few limited exceptions. Legislation has also provided for a relatively comprehensive ban on advertising and promotion of tobacco products, again with a few limited exceptions. The sale of packs of cigarettes containing fewer than 20 is prohibited and retail outlets cannot sell cigarettes to people aged under 18 years. Pictorial warnings have also been introduced and new legislation is proposed that will prohibit smoking in commercial or private vehicles containing child passengers.

The national tobacco policy also introduces other measures aimed at more strongly regulating the tobacco retail environment. These include a prohibition on the sale of tobacco at events or locations primarily intended for people aged under 18. Drawing on the WHO's MPOWER model,[20] which identifies the six most effective evidence-based tobacco control policies, the Irish national policy commits to enforcing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.

4.10 Internet regulation

The **Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland** (ISPAI) was formed in January 1998 by the main Irish Internet service providers at the time. In 2013, there were 23 members, comprising Internet access and hosting providers, including both indigenous and multinational providers active in the Irish market. Although the ISPAI has adopted a self-regulatory approach in agreement with Government, the possibility of a statutory compliance model has consistently loomed in the background.[21] The Office of Internet Safety (OIS), an Executive Office of the Department of Justice and Equality, was established in 2008 to monitor and oversee this self-regulatory framework. As part of its regulatory role, the ISPAI established a hotline service (www.hotline.ie) in 1999 to combat illegal content, mainly child pornography. This service compiles a yearly report. For 2012, of the 117 reports where content was assessed by hotline analysts as possibly illegal, 97 of these related to child pornography, five were drug related and 15 concerned financial scams connected to Ireland (ISPAI, 2013).

The ISPAI has a common *Code of Practice and Ethics* with an **Acceptable Use Policy** and all providers have to abide by this to become members of the Association (*see* http://www.who.int/tobacco/mpower/publications/en_tfi_mpower_brochure_m.pdf?ua=1). The Code states that Internet service providers' (ISPs) services and promotional products must not contain material that is illegal, inappropriate or likely to cause distress, anxiety or inconvenience to others. ISPs are obliged to provide a point of contact to the ISPAI's hotline (*see above*), to comply with any take-down notices made by the ISPAI and to retain copies of the material removed to make it available to the hotline or the police, if required. As part of this Code, complaints are referred to the service provider in the first instance and to the police if illegal. Customers are not permitted to use ISP services to create, host or transmit material that is unlawful, abusive, libellous, vulgar, obscene or calculated to cause unreasonable offence. Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) must include harmful material clauses and ISPs must obey the hotline authorities if ordered to remove specified material.

The ISPAI represents the industry on the Government's *Safer Internet Programme*. If illegal material is on an Irish server, the ISPAI reports this to An Garda Síochána. The ISPAI's website provides no information on complaints received and their outcomes. After some negotiation with providers, the British Government moved to block access to pornography on wireless Internet available in public places and to introduce an 'opt in' facility, rather than an automatic access facility, for pornography for adult Internet users. Despite calls from Senators Jillian van Turnhout and Rónán Mullen to do the same in the Irish context, the ISPAI is reportedly opposed to such measures being introduced because, it argues, they are akin to Internet censorship (O'Gorman, 2012). It has reiterated its support for a self-regulatory framework

---

[20] The six measures identified in the MPOWER model, developed by the World Health Organization, are (1) monitor tobacco use and prevention policies; (2) protect people from tobacco smoke; (3) offer help to quit tobacco use; (4) warn about the dangers of tobacco; (5) enforce bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship; and (6) raise taxes on tobacco (*see* http://www.who.int/tobacco/mpower/mpower_report_six_policies_2008.pdf).

[21] On 20 September 2007, Brian Lenihan, TD, Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, stated at the launch of booklets on Internet safety that if industry self-regulation was not getting the support of all providers in Ireland, which it was not in 2007, he would consider '*a statutory compliance model in the interests of the safety of our children and other vulnerable users of the Internet*'.

and for end-user empowerment of parents/guardians to monitor and control their children's Internet use. So far, there has been no definitive action on the part of Government to go further than this self-regulatory arrangement.[22]

Digital Rights Ireland (DRI) is a campaigning group concerned with promoting digital privacy and maintaining an open Internet free of blocking schemes. Indeed, TJ McIntyre, Chair of DRI and Lecturer in Law at University College Dublin, has argued, based on his assessment of three child abuse blocking schemes, that such schemes have serious shortcomings relating to their legitimacy, transparency, accountability and efficiency. Furthermore, he claimed that the extension of such blocking schemes to other forms of Internet content would sacrifice important Constitutional values relating to privacy and freedom of expression (McIntyre, 2013). Education, activism and court action are the means by which DRI seeks to protect people's digital rights. DRI gave evidence at an Oireachtas Committee hearing on social media and cyberbullying in March 2013, at which it argued for no additional legislation but enforcement of existing legislation to address the issues raised by cyberbullying, better resourcing of the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner to enable it to protect and support individuals to exercise their data protection rights, and more education for parents and children.

As part of the international digital safety drive, **Safer Internet Day** provides an opportunity for industry volunteers, supported by the **National Centre for Technology in Education** (NCTE), to visit schools across Ireland to provide information on using the Internet safely. Issues such as cyberbullying, identity theft, online privacy and 'sexting' (i.e. a portmanteau of sex and texting, which refers to sending sexually explicit text messages, which may include images) are part of the focus of this event. Students in attendance receive a family safety kit, which includes a guide for parents. **Webwise**, a co-funded initiative by the European Safety Internet Programme and Ireland's Department of Education and Skills, has a Facebook page for parents seeking to learn more about communicating with their children about using the Internet safely. In 2013, the **Office for Internet Safety** produced the *Get With It!* series, which comprises four very accessible booklets aimed at parents to guide them on new media technologies, filtering technologies, social networking sites and cyberbullying.

4.11   Cellular regulation

The **Irish Cellular Industry Association** (ICIA) is an alliance of mobile operators (3 Ireland, Meteor Mobile Communications, O2 Ireland (now Three.ie) and Vodafone) and is affiliated to the Telecommunications and Internet Federation, which is part of ICT Ireland within IBEC (Irish Business and Employers Confederation). The ICIA operates *The Irish Mobile Operators' Code of Practice for the responsible and secure use of mobile services* (ICIA, 2006).

In relation to children and young people, the mobile operators must maintain measures permissible by law that give parents visibility of their child's mobile phone usage, account balances and the services they access. Operators are also required to respond promptly to customer reports of receipt of malicious and offensive communications and to forward such complaints to An Garda Síochána where appropriate and to assist with any subsequent police investigation. They are also obliged to respond to reports of spam or other unsolicited commercial communications by referring them to the Commission for Communications Regulation and the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner for investigation. In the Code of Practice, there is also an expressed commitment to develop necessary and easy-to-use tools

---

22   At the launch of Safer Internet Day 2012, Minister Frances Fitzgerald, TD, stated that the UK was further ahead in terms of protecting children from inappropriate online material, but she did not comment on whether plans were in place in Ireland to adopt similar measures (O'Gorman, 2012). On 23 July 2013, Pat Rabbitte, TD and Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, in a news report indicated his preparedness to explore the option of default Internet filters with Irish Internet service providers, but Ronan Lupton, a Director of the ISPAI, in the same news report indicated opposition on the part of Irish Internet service providers to such an initiative.

to allow parents/carers to control their children's Internet access. Operators are also required to provide a link on their websites to the hotline service provided by the Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland (*see Section 4.10*). The ICIA also provides a parents' guide to safe and sensible mobile phone use.

The **Commission for Communications Regulation** (ComReg), established since 2002, has in place a **Code of Practice governing Premium Rate Services** (PRS), which can be found on its website (http://www.comreg.ie/). It also has a consumer website (www.phonesmart.ie), which provides an information section for parents and teachers, and a facility to make complaints. The ComReg (2012) Code of Practice sets out the requirements for promotional material for children's premium rate services: for example, it specifies that children's services must not involve the use of Internet dialler software; competition services must not offer cash as a prize, or feature long or complex rules; children's services must also not cost more than €5 total per single call or transaction, be terminated by forced release once the €5 limit is reached and in the case of subscription services, they must cost no more than €10 per month. Promotional material has to state that the premium rate services (PRS) should only be used with the agreement of the bill payer. It must not appear in any medium or be proximate to any medium or be presented in association with any copy or artwork which is violent or sexually explicit. In addition, the material must not contain anything likely to cause harm to children and it must not exploit their credulity, lack of experience or sense of loyalty, or invade their privacy. The services, the Code states, should not promote excessive use (repeated use of the same PRS or encourage purchase of another PRS) of PRS and it should not make direct appeals to children to buy or donate, unless the product or donation is one that they could reasonably be expected to afford themselves. It requires PRS providers to take all reasonable steps to ensure that end-users under 18 years of age are not using live services other than a children's service and operators of live services are advised to terminate calls of those they suspect of being under the age of 18. The Code also states that sexual entertainment services must not be available to children, or contain references that suggest or imply the involvement of children in any way. It also obliges PRS providers to ensure that users of virtual chat services or contact and dating services are not children.

4.12 Film classification

The role of the statutory **Irish Film Classification Office** (IFCO) is governed by the Censorship of Films Act, 1923 and the Video Recordings Act, 1989. The IFCO classifies cinema releases and video works (DVD, Blu-ray) and is guided by three key principles: that adults (aged over 18 years) should be free within the law to choose what they wish to view; that the Office has a duty to protect children from harm, which requires parental responsibility to be exercised and promoted; and that it respects the values of Irish society. The phrasing '*likely to cause harm to children*' was first introduced into the relevant legislation in 2008 under the Civil Law Miscellaneous Provisions Act, which amended the 1923 and 1989 legislation. The IFCO's remit also extends to trailers for cinema films and video works. Classifications are made by the IFCO Director, supported by a team of assistant film classifiers, and a set of classification guidelines are used to inform the rating, which are mainly concerned with language, sex, drugs and violence. These classification guidelines were updated and extended in 2012.

The IFCO's website is constructed and promoted as a resource for the public, particularly parents/guardians who wish to research the suitability of cinema releases or video works for viewing by themselves and/or their families (*see* http://www.ifco.ie/website/ifco/ifcoweb. nsf/web/classcatintro?opendocument&type=graphic). Parents/guardians are encouraged not only to consult the age classification awarded, but also to use the extensive consumer advice provided on the website to make more informed decisions. On the website, it is explained that the context in which material is presented is often the determining factor in the age classification awarded and that films or video works are not rated on the basis of one short image or scene. For example, a film classified as 'PG' is deemed suitable for viewing by children

aged eight and over, but this certification means that it is not a children's film per se, meaning that mature issues may be addressed in the film, but a redemptive or positive resolution is the result. Frightening scenes cannot be sustained or graphic, but there may be stronger scenes in a fantasy film or comic context. Sex references are mild, implied rather than depicted, and sexual innuendo may be included. The language has to be mild and strong language can only be used discreetly and if it is contextually justified. Racist or discriminatory language is only permissible if it is used in an educational context. References to drug use have to be mild and related to soft drug use only, and stronger references have to be set in an educational context.

The classification of online material is currently not within the IFCO's remit and neither are video games, which cannot be prohibited under Section 3(1) of the 1989 Video Recordings Act. The IFCO has called for the European guidelines (the PEGI system, *see Section 4.14 below*) on video games to be incorporated into Irish legislation when the 1989 Act is being reviewed (IFCO, 2008).

Parents or adults who witness a child unaccompanied by a parent or older adult at an age-inappropriate screening are encouraged to make this known to cinema management or to contact the gardaí or the IFCO. If unhappy with a classification awarded, parents are encouraged to make their views known by sending an e-mail to the IFCO. Breaches of the relevant legislation are referred to An Garda Síochána for investigation.

While visits to the IFCO website have been on the increase, the IFCO has highlighted budgetary constraints as a reason for not engaging in an extensive public consultation or awareness campaign in recent years. A survey undertaken in 2007 by the IFCO highlighted that only 12% of people were aware of its website. A parental attitudinal survey undertaken by the IFCO in 2013 found that only 17% of respondents reported having visited the IFCO website. The findings also revealed that depictions of violence and sex on film ranked higher in parents' concerns than drugs and language. 90% of parent respondents stated that they always check the age classification before permitting their children to watch a film, while 22% reported that a child was upset by content the child had recently viewed on film. 89% of parents stated that they would like the IFCO classifications to be shown before films aired on television in Ireland, and 81% indicated that while they believed classifications were useful, they felt that parents should have the final say on what children can and cannot watch (IFCO, 2013).

4.13 Pan European Game Information (PEGI) system

The Pan European Game Information (PEGI) system is a system of self-regulation for the European interactive software industry regarding age rating labelling, promotion and advertising of interactive software products and maintenance of safe online gameplay. It was developed by the **Interactive Software Federation of Europe** (ISFE) and is supported by all the major console manufacturers. The **PEGI Code of Conduct** outlines the obligations of signatories, which relate to age ratings, online gameplay environments, product labelling, promotion and advertising. Launched in 2003, the PEGI system replaced a number of national ratings systems with a single system, which applies in 30 countries including Ireland.

The PEGI rating system sets out the age suitability for a game with reference to the following: bad language, discrimination, drugs, fear, gambling, sex, violence and online availability. A game with an adult classification is presented as PEGI18 or one considered suitable for all age groups has a label of PEGI3 or PEGIOK.

The PEGI website (*see* www.pegi.info) provides hints for parents as well as extended consumer advice and a good gaming guide for parents. It also provides details on the parental control tools available to facilitate parents/guardians to control or limit access, including the control of Internet access from consoles or the amount of time children spend playing. In addition it provides online links to the control tools of different game systems. A PEGI retail code

requires retailers of the relevant products in the different countries concerned to comply with a listed set of practices when engaged in face-to-face interactions with customers, including the maintenance of records of consumer complaints and refusals to sell products to consumers not of the appropriate age.

The PEGI Management Board comprises games publishers, manufacturers and promoters, as well as representatives of the PEGI Council and the PEGI Expert Group. The PEGI Council comprises national representatives of the 30 countries where the PEGI system applies; in the Irish context, the Deputy Director of the IFCO represents Ireland. The PEGI Expert Group includes legal professionals, psychologists, civil servants, academics, media experts, parents and consumer representatives who have a concern with the protection of minors from the 30 countries where the PEGI system applies. The PEGI Complaints Board handles complaints and conflicts over ratings, and the PEGI Enforcement Committee implements the regulations of the Management Board and enforces rules and sanctions set out in the PEGI Code of Conduct, as well as decisions made by the Complaints Board. Breaches of the Code can be punished by fines of different amounts, a period of disqualification from the PEGI system or product removal from the market. A PEGI Developer Group and a Legal Committee play key roles relating to the evolving legal and technological environment.

The only Enforcement Committee ruling for 2011 related to advertising for a Wii game called 'We Dare' by the publisher of Ubisoft. This was granted a PEGI12 rating, which the publisher accepted, although the publisher was seeking a '16' rating for marketing purposes. The publisher put online on its YouTube channel an advertisement showing the PEGI rating, but the content of the advertisement (which had been viewed over 1.5 million times) gave rise to the question whether the game was much more 'adult' than it really is. The PEGI Enforcement Committee concluded that the advertisement did not adequately reflect the nature and content of the product, and thus misled consumers. It required that the online advertisement be taken down within three working days of the Committee's decision; if not, further sanctions would follow (PEGI, 2011).

4.14 Data protection

The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner was established in Ireland under the Data Protection Act, 1988. The Data Protection (Amendment) Act, 2003 updated that legislation, implementing the provisions of EU Directive 95/46. Together, the Acts set out the general principle that individuals should be in a position to control how data relating to them is used. The Data Protection Commissioner is responsible for upholding the rights of individuals as set out in the Acts and for enforcing the obligations upon data controllers. The Commissioner is appointed by Government and is independent in the exercise of his or her functions. Individuals who feel their rights in this area are being infringed can complain to the Office, which will investigate the issue and take steps to resolve it.

The case studies available on the website of the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner (www.dataprotection.ie) provide insights into issues investigated on a day-to-day basis. For the purpose of the present research, a review was undertaken of cases relating to children, and thus categorised as 'minor', during the period 1996 to 2011. In total, there were nine complaints in this category over these years, seven of which were relevant to the subject of this research (*see Appendix 12*). All cases involved action by the Office to make companies, banks and schools take their data protection responsibilities seriously and to abide by the relevant legislation. As evident, in all cases, it was parents who brought complaints to the attention of the Office.

In 2005, a public awareness survey commissioned by the Office found that young people displayed some of the lowest levels of awareness and knowledge of data protection and personal privacy issues. After consulting with teenagers, the Office took a number of initiatives

to promote awareness of data protection and privacy issues among this age group, which included a resource booklet for use in schools in the teaching of Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), a video clip competition, a Young Social Innovators survey (2008) and a stand to raise awareness at the Young Social Innovators' exposition in Dublin in 2008.

In 2010, a privacy survey, again commissioned by the Office, was conducted among a significant population of primary and post-primary students. It found that less than half of the children and young people surveyed who used social networking had read the social networking site's privacy policy. A number of different reasons were identified for this, including that it was difficult to find or they were unaware of it. Results indicated that children were generally not comfortable sharing data beyond their friends and family, although boys demonstrated more relaxed attitudes than girls (44% of girls and 35% of boys had read a privacy policy) and there was little difference in this regard between children at primary and post-primary levels. The vast majority of respondents felt that it was the responsibility of social network providers to provide settings that are 'most private' by default, indicating quite clearly that they believed that *they* should not be held solely responsible for their own data.

The results of the privacy survey were used to make a number of key recommendations. The need for education at primary school level was highlighted on the grounds that there were high levels of engagement in social networking among this group and that they may not be aware of a privacy policy or where to find it on a website. It was also suggested that education initiated at this age might provide a bulwark against risky behaviour in relation to data protection and privacy issues, more likely to happen in teenage years. Children and young people also demonstrated high levels of acceptance for parental consent to be necessary in many, if not all, scenarios where their data might need protecting.

A very interesting finding revealed in the survey was that the population of young people who engaged in social networking practice were more likely than their counterparts, who do not, to exercise greater responsibility in relation to their data and sharing it, challenging notions that this group may be more reckless where their personal data is concerned. In the British context, Consumer Focus highlighted the widely held belief that children over the age of 12 are considered capable of giving their consent for their personal information to be collected and used. In terms of children developing an understanding of advertising intentions, it seems from the literature and studies reviewed that different stages of understanding have been identified. Studies (Kunkel *et al*, 2004; Rozendaal *et al*, 2011) have identified the age range of 8-12 years as the most significant in terms of children developing cognitive capacity to understand advertising's persuasive intent. In the Irish context, the outcome of Case Study 10/2003 presented in Appendix 12, involving the Bank of Ireland marketing to 12-13 year-olds, suggests that older children (12/13+ years) may also be perceived as capable of giving consent. It would also seem that parents and children can exercise little control over the passive collection of data from their computer use (e.g. cookies) that facilitates targeted advertising.

In 2014, the then Data Protection Commissioner was cited in a media report as saying that telecommunications firms provided the largest source of complaints by Irish citizens for unsolicited marketing and spam by text, e-mail and phone (Edwards, 2014). In the same report, it was stated that Irish people tended not to complain about companies such as Google which control huge amounts of personal data and which have been targeted by data protection authorities in other European jurisdictions because of the perceived ambiguous language in their privacy policies and for not doing enough to make it clear to people what happens to their data. The tendency not to complain was considered by the then Data Protection Commissioner as the price people were willing to pay to access services, which do not advertise or use their data, but which would otherwise cost them money. The Commissioner identified other key sources of complaints in Ireland during the economic recession as relating to people not gaining access to personal data held by financial institutions or employers in cases of dismissal. He also reminded companies and agencies that even if data processing is outsourced by them, they still remain responsible for any data breaches that occur (Edwards, 2014).

At an event in December 2013, the then Data Protection Commissioner welcomed the EU Commission's proposal to strengthen the EU law on data protection in the Internet age. This proposed law is designed to take the form of a directly applicable regulation applying uniformly across the EU region, ensuring that European residents have rights to control the collection and use of their personal data wherever they are and whoever has collected it. It covers any agency or organisation providing services to EU residents, regardless of whether they are based in the EU or not. Article 8 of the proposed legislation also gives special attention to the data protection rights of children and it prohibits the processing of personal data from a child aged under 13 years without parental/guardian consent and it requires companies to take reasonable steps to verify such consent. It will require that a privacy impact assessment be conducted by companies engaged in large-scale processing of the personal data of children. The Irish Data Protection Commissioner also claimed that a '*right to be forgotten*' would be given particular emphasis in relation to personal data made available when a person was a child and that data protection authorities will also be required to give specific attention to children when discharging their duties. He acknowledged the ongoing challenge involved in ensuring that children know how to protect themselves and their data, especially online, but he asserted that this should be seen as being of no less significance than any other kind of protection afforded to children (Hawkes, 2013).

The study by Cai and Zhao (2013) in the USA of online advertising on popular children's websites involved coding and analysing a total sample of 117 commercial children's websites, selected for inclusion because of their target audience (under 12 years) and because of the level of online traffic from children (under 12 years) they received. The authors found that there was more commercialised activity on children's websites (each website in the sample hosted on average 11.8 unique advertisements), but it was occurring in a safer online environment. They acknowledged the efforts made to comply with the Children Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA),[23] but also found that not all children's sites studied were completely complying with the requirements and that there was little attention being given to children's safety when children accessed sites linked to children's websites through clickable advertisements. The authors identified a number of other measures that could be taken to enhance online safety and privacy, including better labelling of advertisements, greater use of bridge windows or pages, voice alerts and fixing advertisements' positions on websites. Parental mediation, in the form of technical mediation (using technology to restrict access) for younger children and active co-use (parents and children using the Internet together) with older children, was also identified as useful.

4.15 Consumer protection

Traditionally, consumer protection was the remit of the National Consumer Agency. However, this agency was amalgamated in 2014 with the Competition Authority into a new statutory body called the **Competition and Consumer Protection Commission** (CCPC). The remit of the CCPC is to protect and strengthen competition in the market, to empower consumers to make informed decisions and to protect them from harmful business practices.

4.16 Media literacy

Considering that young people are viewed as enthusiastic consumers of old and new media, media literacy, or what is more particularly understood as critical media literacy, is frequently endorsed as a means of addressing some of the challenges levelled by both the commercialisation and sexualisation of children. As the regulation of children's access to media is sometimes constructed as a near-impossible task inside and outside the home,

---

23   The Children Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) took effect in the USA in 2000 and requires that any commercial website that knowingly collects personal information from children aged under 13 years has to post a privacy policy on the site and seek parental permission (Federal Trade Commission, 1999).

media literacy is often proposed as the best alternative response to the challenges posited. For example, some social researchers have argued, based on their findings, that active mediation in families in terms of parents talking with children about what media they are consuming is more effective than restrictive mediation, or seeking to limit their exposure or experience (Buijzen, 2009; O'Neill and Dinh, 2012).

However, despite the strong support for media literacy in some scholarship (Potter, 2010; Lamb and Peterson, 2011; Marvin, 2012), it also has its detractors and critical commentators. Gill (2012) has argued that media literacy education prioritises the cognitive domain, as if to suggest that by being able to critically read a text inoculates us from its effects. She also argues that it tends to rely on a unified rather than a contradictory conception of human subjectivity, and in her own research she drew attention to the young female participants who were media literate but who still felt pain, anger and disempowerment because they experienced confusing and ambiguous relations with the media they consumed. She also questioned the focus of media literacy in making people responsible for their own engagements with media, arguing that underpinning media literacy education is the view that the existence of sexist media calls out for a more sophisticated and literate user and not a campaign to stamp out sexism (Gill, 2012). Buckingham (2013) also argues that the focus on media literacy as the antidote to the negative effects of advertising and marketing to children is erroneous and that it is also not supported by what limited research evidence does exist about its positive impact in this regard.

Media literacy has an established history in the Irish educational context, extending back to the 1970s when the Irish Film Institute and the Curriculum Development Unit of the CDVEC in Trinity College Dublin took important initiatives to resource, train and pilot programmes in this area of education. The first-ever national media education conference was held in Ireland in 1985 and TAME (Teachers' Association for Media Education) ensured that a support network and resource infrastructure existed for the teaching of media literacy in the school curriculum. However, a study in 2007 graphically outlined the poor state of media literacy education in Irish schools and beyond (Barnes *et al*, 2007). This research indicated that Ireland had fallen far behind many other countries in this area of educational provision. Key factors identified as contributing to its decline were identified. Some innovative initiatives in the formal and informal sectors were acknowledged; for example, the Transition Year module 'Moving Image', which provides students with a platform of film screening and workshops to consider and discuss issues pertaining to certification and censorship. However, the report revealed that media literacy had never become embedded in either the primary or post-primary curricula. It was not a subject in its own right; rather, it involved informal, frequently unaccredited learning, often tacked on, rather than integral to, a subject like English, CPSE (Civic, Personal and Social Education) or Environmental and Social Studies. In some cases, it was only given attention in the Transition Year programme or in vocational Leaving Certificate programmes. It largely depended on the enthusiasm of individual teachers or schools to take it on, often without sufficient training, support or up-to-date resources relevant to delivering it in an Irish context. The Teachers' Association for Media Education (TAME) was inactive in 2007 when Barnes *et al* were conducting their research and there was no body taking ownership or supporting this area of education. There existed no standardised provision, no overall strategy and no commitment to the resourcing or development of the subject at any level (Barnes *et al*, 2007).

The 2007 report made a number of recommendations that would need to be addressed if the future of media literacy was to be made more secure in Ireland. These recommendations stated that media education needed to be revitalised and its relevance to contemporary culture made evident; it needed a clear and coherent curriculum strategy; key stakeholders needed to collaborate to raise the profile of the subject into the future; and key roles needed to be assigned to these stakeholders and mandated if the subject was to be sustained and nurtured into the future (Barnes *et al*, 2007).

Recent developments include the introduction of digital literacy as a short optional course as a result of Junior Cycle reform and a more explicit focus on the development of critical literacy skills in the English curriculum, also at Junior Cycle level (Cahill, 2014). While there are more curricular opportunities for developing media literacy skills since Barnes *et al*'s study (2007), greater attention is given to this sphere of education in some other countries, as will be made evident in Chapter 5.

4.17 Stay Safe

The **Stay Safe Programme** is designed for primary school children and its overall aim is to educate them for the purpose of reducing their vulnerability to abuse and bullying through the delivery of a personal safety education programme. The programme seeks to enhance children's self-protective skills by learning about safe and unsafe situations, bullying, inappropriate touch, secrets and telling, and stranger danger. In collaboration with Webwise, the Stay Safe Programme developed a resource for use by teachers who wish to build an online safety aspect into the curriculum at primary level. At the time of writing this report, the Stay Safe Programme was being updated, and parents as well as teachers (but not students) were being surveyed on the programme's website to give their views on what they would like to see included in a revised curriculum.

4.18 Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

The **Social, Personal and Health Education** (SPHE) Programme, implemented at Junior and Senior Cycle, comprises 10 modules, one of which is **Relationships and Sexuality Education** (RSE). It is delivered in one class period per week and it has a number of aims, which include social skills development and learning about decision-making, as well as the enhancement of opportunity for physical, mental and emotional health.

A recent study of SPHE implementation in post-primary schools raised a number of factors which, on their own or conjoined, are working to promote or impede successful implementation (Nic Gabhainn *et al*, 2013). However, what is noteworthy in relation to this study is the evidence that the quality of SPHE implementation varied considerably between schools and that there was at times very poor consultation with parents and students in relation to material covered. Clearly, the SPHE Programme provides one of the most significant opportunities in the school curriculum for issues pertaining to the present study to be explored by students, including health and well-being, personal safety, care for self and for others.

The **Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Programme** is an integrated component of SPHE. The aim of the programme is, according to the policy guidelines (Department of Education, 1997, p. 4), to help students '*acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework*'. The RSE Programme covers primary and post-primary schooling (ages 5-18 years). Published resource materials accompany the programme. These materials are not prescriptive, but instead provide a range of options in relation to the delivery of the programme in each individual school. While schools are expected to deliver all elements of RSE, which is in keeping with the programme's emphasis on relationships and on students' holistic development, how the resource materials are used is dependent on many factors, including what is stated in the local school RSE policy. This means that students in Ireland do not have equal opportunities in their sex education learning, a fact that has been made increasingly evident in a number of research studies to date. For example, boys' schools (single-sex) have been found to spend less time than other schools on programme implementation, homosexuality seems to be a neglected topic in RSE teaching, and early school-leavers have been found to have received little or no sex education (O'Carroll and Szalacha, 2000; Mayock and Byrne, 2004; Mayock *et al*, 2007; McBride *et al*, 2012).

Lower rates of implementation, particularly in the Senior Cycle, were found in a study of SPHE and RSE implementation, which surveyed students and was conducted by delegates attending the National Youth Parliament, Dáil na nÓg (Roe, 2010). The main recommendations put forward by survey participants were mandatory RSE classes, a wider curriculum with more detailed coverage of topics and better trained teachers to deliver RSE. The Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate in 2013 also drew attention to the 'evident weaknesses' in 39 of 63 schools inspected in the quality of planning for the teaching of RSE at Senior Cycle (McGuire, 2014). Acknowledging some evidence of what has been defined as 'good practice', a number of problems relating to the teaching of RSE were highlighted in an article in *The Irish Times* (McGuire, 2014), which included bias in information presented or incorrect information presented, schools' use of external and unaccountable groups to deliver aspects of the programme, the extensive use of abstinence-only approaches despite the lack of evidence for the effectiveness of these approaches, and a disregard for the rights of students to a comprehensive health education.

4.19 Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE)

Civic, Social and Political Education is a Junior Certificate course in Active Citizenship, based on human rights and social responsibilities. It comprises one class per week, and the concepts of rights and responsibilities, democracy and law, stewardship, interdependence, development and human dignity underpin much of the content of this course. It is built around the four units of the individual citizen, the concept of community, the Irish State, and Ireland and the world. Relevant for the present study is that the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner developed a booklet for CSPE on the topic of data protection and there is also a link to resources on teaching consumer education in the classroom on the CSPE website. Clearly, with reference to this study, there is potential in CSPE to explore issues with students pertaining to gender equality, consumption and retail, data protection, dignity and rights.

4.20 Other relevant initiatives – Positive Childhood Campaign and 'Clued-in'

In March 2012, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs launched the **Positive Childhood Campaign**, called *Letting Kids be Kids*. This is described as a parent-led campaign and was established by Sheena Horgan, an Irish consultant on youth and family issues and an 'ethical marketer'. The campaign's mission is '*to involve every citizen of Ireland to support making childhood in Ireland as positive as possible*'. It provides a platform for parents to air their views through online surveys, Facebook discussions and tweets. It focuses on eight themes: online and mobile safety; children's clothing; food and nutrition; fitness, health and sport; self-esteem and positive parenting; childhood past and present; and play.

Associated with the Positive Childhood Campaign is the www.mykidstime.com, which provides listings of activities in different parts of Ireland, aimed at families with children. Somewhat ironically, this website has an online store supporting independent retailers and producers of goods and it facilitates the advertising of products considered suitable to encourage a 'positive childhood'. Surprisingly, one advertisement on the site was for Ireland's only hair salon and ear-piercing specialists for children.

Overall, it seems that the campaign and associated sites provide considerable opportunity for the promotion of what might be considered to be more 'respectable' family consumption practices and behaviours in Irish society.

In 2015, the Irish League of Credit Unions launched a resource entitled 'Clued-in', which aims to improve second-level students' skills in financial literacy (*see* www.creditunion.ie/cluedin). Findings from the Teens and Money Survey indicated that 72% of parents thought that schools

87

did not do enough to educate teenagers on money matters and this statistic was used to make the case for this initiative being taken (Irish League of Credit Unions, 2015). The 'Clued-in' resource is designed for delivery by teachers and is described as a guide to personal finances and credit unions. It is divided into five sections, each with learning objectives and related activities, covering topics entitled Money and Me; Spending and Budgeting; Credit and Debt; The Role of Credit Unions; and Projects.

4.21 Summary

The 'sexualisation' of children and the growth of a children's market are both bound up with the development in Ireland of a capitalist economy, wider social and cultural forces, and significant transformations in the ways we live our lives. Considering the existence of a number of different codes of practice dispersed across a number of different agencies and governing how products are marketed to children in the Irish context, it is highly unlikely that many parents are aware of the regulations as they relate to the protection of children, or that they know precisely who to complain to or how to do so, even if they consider a marketing campaign irresponsible. In many cases, the only measure of compliance to codes of practice or guidelines can be the number of complaints received or the number of complaints received that are upheld. This is, however, not a systematic measure of compliance because it relies on complaints rather than a proactive exploration as to whether the codes are being transgressed and in what ways.

This chapter has also highlighted that what we are dealing with is a very complex and extensive stakeholder environment, which generates a significant set of challenges for moving forward. Marketing to children is governed mainly by self-regulation by industry bodies, in some instances by co-regulation (e.g. between statutory agencies and industry) and by legislation. Aside from being more compatible with neoliberal forms of governance, the 'positives' of self-regulation are perceived to be its relatively low cost, its accessibility, its flexibility in operation and adaptation, and its suitability for adjudicating on judgemental/subjective concerns pertaining to taste, decency, portrayal of women and children (Twomey, 2014).

Self-regulatory codes presumably have the full cooperation of those companies that sign up to them. But they may not always be adequately monitored and the companies that choose not to sign up to them are definitely not adequately monitored. In this regard, Governments and State agencies can play a role in incentivising non-signatory companies to become signatories and in incentivising greater compliance with codes of practice. Furthermore, self-regulatory codes are introduced predominantly to encourage the level of restraint of commercial interests necessary in order to avoid more stringent regulation.

In the Irish context, there is some dissatisfaction with the operation of some self-regulatory codes among some campaigning groups and organisations. At a minimum, they require concepts in codes to be more clearly defined, codes to be more responsive to their concerns, and complaints submitted to be addressed in a more timely fashion. As an optimum, in a few instances, organisations seek the replacement of self-regulation by statutory regulation. However, the implications of such a replacement would require careful consideration. While certain measures or concepts in codes are not that clearly defined for members of the public, they seem to be clear enough to regulatory agencies to inform their decision-making on upholding or rejecting complaints. At the very least, more work may be needed to better research, define and apply standards within codes and to then promote greater public awareness of their existence and their provisions.

Some regulatory agencies' websites are better than others in terms of setting out very clearly the standards required and providing bulletins of complaints, decisions and the relevant response timeframes in the interests of transparency and accountability. However, the websites of some other self-regulatory bodies are very poor in this regard and do little to facilitate the process of making a complaint or accessing public opinion. Presumably, this presents

challenges for parents, consumer groups or organisations representing children's interests, to navigate, to stay fully informed of developments, to make their views known or to complain about marketing campaigns. Over the years, relatively few complaints have been made to regulatory bodies relating to advertising directed at children, and the number of these upheld is even smaller. However, this may be for a range of reasons and not only because parents or others do not see a need to complain. Possible reasons explaining this are further explored in Chapter 6. It is not evident that there is any agency facilitating children or young people to take the initiative themselves to complain if they have a bad experience. Regulatory agencies' websites in Ireland tend not to have child-friendly features or parent or teacher resources to facilitate education or greater public understanding.

Media production has diversified considerably, posing challenges generally for regulation but also for regulation in terms of children's access. The borderless nature of technologies such as the Internet make the task of regulating at national level a challenge, and increasingly there are expectations that within the EU and internationally, key agencies have to set universal standards for application at national level. Industry self-regulation, although practised very differently, is a very prominent regulatory strategy and the one adopted for the digital economy in the EU and the USA (Newman and Bach, 2004). As new marketing practices develop, they may remain outside the remits of codes of practice for some time while the regulatory infrastructure struggles to keep pace, as, for example, with digital marketing strategies. It is also clear that integrated marketing practices and new digital marketing techniques present more challenges in the context of regulation.

Undoubtedly, there can be negative and unforeseen consequences of increasing regulation, and so commentators (e.g. Buckingham, 2009) call for a careful cost-benefit analysis of the impact of increasing regulation in particular areas and for a strong evidence base built on focused research, which demonstrates the effects of marketing to be significant and greater than other influential factors in children's lives. For example, in the review on the impact of the commercial world on children in Britain (Buckingham *et al*, 2009), the many submissions calling for extended regulation on commercial activity targeting children (in the form of advertising bans) were acknowledged. However, the lack of demonstrable evidence as to the positive impact of extended HFSS (high-fat, sugar and salt) advertising regulation on actually reducing obesity was used to question the wisdom of introducing such a ban. Buckingham *et al*'s identification of a lack of 'trusted' spaces where stakeholders can discuss the issues in more balanced rather than ideological ways also merits consideration, even if it is very difficult to achieve in practice. Also worthy of consideration in the Irish context is the authors' challenge to governments to not only resort to negative regulation, but also to look to opportunities to intervene positively in this field in order to make and stimulate alternatives to market provision for children, rather than to deny access.

There is potential within existing programmes in Irish schools (such as SPHE, RSE and CSPE) to explore aspects of commercialisation and sexualisation. However, it is not clear if their potential is being realised, and media literacy education in Ireland is in a poor state and has certainly not been keeping pace with children's online worlds. As will be further explored in Chapter 5, many countries have better resourced, developed and actively pursued media literacy in formal and informal education settings, as well as regulatory initiatives, as a means of promoting the positive opportunities and addressing the challenges raised by commercialisation and sexualisation. They have also made efforts to target parents by increasing their awareness, by providing them with resources and by enabling them to develop their skills to more effectively parent their children in an increasingly digitised, commercial and sexual world.

5. Trends in the regulatory landscape in other jurisdictions

The purpose of this chapter is to provide some insights into the contexts and regulatory frameworks in other jurisdictions as they relate to the commercialisation and sexualisation of children. It is difficult to disentangle the regulations relating to children, which tend to be embedded within the wider regulatory frameworks governing the entire population. However, a significant effort has been made to do that for the purpose of this discussion. In the first part of the chapter, we focus on specific features or unusual aspects of the regulatory frameworks operating in different countries to protect children. We then narrow the focus to concentrate on four countries in particular: the UK, Finland, Australia and Canada. These countries were selected for a more detailed review for several key reasons: (1) they have had recent policy reports on the commercialisation and sexualisation of children, prompting significant developments in these fields (UK, Australia and Canada); (2) up-to-date reviews of their regulatory frameworks have been conducted, which provide a solid foundation for this chapter (UK and Finland); and (3) they are identified as early pioneers of 'responsible' advertising to children (Canada and Finland) or are perceived to be pursuing this reputation actively (UK).

5.1 Aspects of the regulatory landscape in different contexts

Advertising regulations

The **Nordic countries** tend to be associated with a strong concern about child consumption in particular. When compared with other countries such as the UK and the USA, **Norway** has a strong tradition of State restrictions and public regulations designed to protect consumers, reduce consumption and protect children (Hovda, 2014). Certain products popular with children (e.g. chocolate) were distributed on a limited scale until 1950 (Korsvold, 2012). Commercial TV channels first appeared in Norway in the 1980s and there has been a strong tradition of restricting advertising to children on the grounds of protecting them. Alcohol advertising is completely banned (Korsvold, 2012; Hovda, 2014).

Norway is not unique in this context. Traditionally, Sweden, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Italy, and Luxembourg have operated different degrees of restrictive bans on television advertising to children. In **Greece**, it is prohibited by law to advertise toys on TV between the hours of 7am and 10pm. **Sweden** introduced significant restrictions on TV advertising to children aged under 12 years in 1991. However, these restrictions only apply to TV broadcast advertising from within Sweden (Plogell and Sundström, 2004). Increasingly, bans on TV advertising have been undermined by the presence of satellite television advertising. The negative effects of operating such bans have also been highlighted, some of which include the loss of advertising revenue for making children's TV programmes; the redirection of the advertising spend to new sites (e.g. Internet), aspects of which may be less well regulated; and the lack of entitlement afforded to children to assert their right to access information about children's products and to learn skills appropriate to growing up in a commercial world (Buckingham, 2011).

Access to pornography

Iceland is often praised for its anti-corporate culture and promotion of gender equality initiatives. While a number of governments (e.g. UK, Sweden and Denmark) were working with Internet service providers to find ways to address the problem of children's access to Internet pornography, in Iceland a proposed legislative ban on violent Internet pornography was championed by feminists, child protection advocates and support services for victims of sexual violence, one of which generated much media attention and debate (Arthur, 2013). This was in keeping with the increased attention being given to regulating the sex industry in Iceland over recent years. Iceland is also a society where highly sexualised images of women

are very rare in advertising, but where a ban on selling pornography is not actively enforced (*The Economist*, 2013). Indeed, a survey conducted in 2013 revealed that '*almost every Internet user in Iceland had seen pornography*' (40% accidentally, 56% deliberately) and 60% of those surveyed thought it should be legalised (Fontaine, 2013).

The initiative to ban online pornography, welcomed by many, also generated considerable scepticism as to how the legislation could be written and how it could be effectively enforced. Blocking Icelandic credit cards on pornographic sites and firewalls/filters to block access to pornography were reported as methods being considered in an effort to make the legislation operable, yet problems with these methods were also highlighted (Arthur, 2013). The proposal suffered a considerable setback when a new government came to power before the legislation was passed. However, Icelandic anti-pornography activists vowed to continue their campaign to see a legislative ban on pornography introduced.

Film

Sweden, which is noted for its strong protective legislation banning advertising to children, is also recognised for taking policy leads on initiatives designed to promote gender equality. In 2013, an initiative was undertaken to address the under-representation and narrow representation of women in cinema (Lancaster, 2013). Known as the 'Bechdel Test' and supported by the Swedish Film Institute, it involves the application of a rating system to highlight gender bias in films, with the overall goal being defined as seeing more female perspectives and stories on Swedish cinema screens. An 'A' rating is only to be issued to films that are considered to answer positively to the following three questions:

4. Are there two or more named female characters in the film?
5. Do the named female characters talk to each other?
6. Do the female characters talk to each other about something other than a man?

In a report profiling this rating system, it was noted that many of the most popular films on release in the recent past would have failed the test, such as the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, the *Star Wars* franchise and seven of the eight *Harry Potter* films (Lancaster, 2013).

Child pageants

In September 2013, the Senate in **France** voted to amend legislation to ban beauty pageants for children under the age of 16 years in an effort to protect girls from being sexualised too early. Under Article 58 of the Law on Real Equality Between Women and Men (2014) beauty contests for under 13-year-olds are prohibited and any person who organises a contest for children aged between 13 and 16 years, which focuses on appearance, must obtain authorisation from the relevant state agency. Only contests considered to protect the dignity and well-being of the child are to be authorised, and failure to seek authorisation is punishable by fine.

Video games/consoles

China operated a ban on the sale of foreign-made consoles in 2000, citing concerns about the harmful effects of violent video games on young people. However, the ban was lifted in 2014 and seems to have had limited effectiveness. Consoles were available in China while the ban was in place and PC, Internet and mobile gaming continued to rise substantially over the years (Mitchell, 2014).

5.2   The UK

A narrative of crisis or social decline associated with public debate on childhood, particularly working-class childhood, has been considered important to understanding the attention given to commercialisation and sexualisation of children in the UK context (Kehily, 2010; Buckingham, 2011). It is a narrative bolstered by the publicisation of study findings (e.g. UNICEF, 2013) indicating lower levels of well-being among children and young people in the UK relative to children in other countries. As the attention given to the impact of commercialisation and sexualisation on children has grown, it has given rise to much academic debate on a range of aspects. However, a significant number of initiatives have been taken in recent years under the rubric of protecting childhood from perceived negative external commercial and sexual influences.

The Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations (CPRs) are applicable to all promotions and marketing in the UK and provide a general prohibition of unfair and misleading commercial practices in business to consumer transactions. An individual under the age of 16 years is considered 'a child' for the purpose of advertising law in the UK, with those aged 16-18 years sometimes referred to as 'young persons'. However, some advertising restrictions (e.g. alcohol, slimming products) apply to any person under the age of 18 years.

Advertising

The UK Code of Non-Broadcast Advertising, Sales Promotions and Direct Marketing (CAP Code), produced by the Committee of Advertising Practice (2010), sets out the general and industry-specific guidelines governing advertising content in printed and electronic materials. The CAP Code is enforced by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). A number of companies (e.g. Coca-Cola, Microsoft, Vodafone) have committed to not using under-16s in peer-to-peer marketing or as brand ambassadors. Since the Bailey Review (Bailey, 2011), stricter guidelines are now in place governing the employment of children for marketing purposes.

Broadcasting

The British Code of Broadcast Advertising (BCAP Code), produced by the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice, sets out general and industry-specific guidelines governing advertising on terrestrial, satellite and interactive television and radio channels licensed by the Office of Communications (Ofcom). The BCAP Code is also enforced by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). Following the Bailey Review (Bailey, 2011), Ofcom published new guidance for broadcasters on compliance with the television watershed (9pm), also focusing on material shown immediately before and after the watershed. Similar to the CAP Code, a number of large companies (e.g. Coca-Cola, Vodafone, British Toy and Hobby Association) have promised not to use under-16s as brand ambassadors or in peer-to-peer marketing strategies, so as to keep within the BCAP Code. The Authority for Television On Demand (ATVOD), responsible for television on-demand services, regulates the editorial content of UK on-demand services. It provides that material not suitable for those under 18 years must not be available in a way that they will be able to see or hear it. If persons are dissatisfied after making a complaint to the service provider, they are advised to contact ATVOD, which has the power to sanction breaches. ATVOD also produces a complaints bulletin.

Premium rate services

PhonepayPlus carries out the regulatory functions of the premium rate services market on behalf of Ofcom. The PhonepayPlus Code of Practice (PhonepayPlus, 2013) contains provisions relating to content, promotion and overall operation of premium rate products or services in the UK. Premium rate services must not directly appeal to under-16s. Other limits and restrictions also apply to these services where children are concerned.

Internet

As a result of the Byron Review (2008), the UK Council on Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) was established, comprising multi-stakeholders including charities, academics, policy-makers and industry representatives. Its purpose is to lead the way in the promotion of good policy and practice in the field of child Internet safety. Some of its activities have involved the introduction of a family-friendly Internet Code of Practice drawn up by service providers following a consultation about parental Internet controls. In its publications and materials, the UKCCIS has sought to promote the positives associated with children's Internet use, while debunking some of the myths about the dangers posed by the Internet with reference to the relevant empirical data. At the same time, it acknowledges the risks posed by Internet usage which are supported by the empirical evidence and it seeks to address these by offering advice and promoting best practices among a range of stakeholders (policy-makers, parents, teachers, industry, child safety organisations and children) who are encouraged to work in partnership. Byron (2010) in her *Review of the Progress since the 2008 Bryon Review* lauded the UKCCIS as a very positive initiative in terms of providing a 'one-stop shop' for Internet safety, but also made a number of recommendations to enhance its operation, two of which included better resourcing and support from Government, and stronger engagement with children and parents.

Following the Bailey Review (2011), the four main Internet service providers in Britain (BT, Sky, TalkTalk and Virgin Media) have committed to providing whole-home filtering solutions to protect all devices in the home and to making the set-up of Internet controls an unavoidable step for parents. They have also committed to putting in place appropriate measures to ensure that the person setting up such controls is over 18 years of age. Many of the major public Wi-Fi and mobile Internet service providers also provide filtered services (e.g. in London underground stations, McDonald's restaurants, Starbucks coffee shops). All the UK mobile operators also filter adult content on pay-as-you-go mobile phone purchases. A next step, as identified in the Bailey (2010) *Review of Progress* report, was to obtain a firmer commitment from Wi-Fi providers and the retail and hospitality sectors that pornography would not be accessible in public places where children were likely to visit. Since 2013, by voluntary agreement between the Government and Internet service providers and under threat of legislation, default blocking of specific online content has been happening in the UK. This has sparked contentious discussion as to whether it represents the beginning of creeping censorship in the name of child protection or a very welcome intervention designed to protect children by making online pornographic material much less accessible.

Film

The British Board of Film Classification (*see* http://www.bbfc.co.uk) is the independent body that classifies films, videos, DVDs and some video games, as well as advertisements and trailers. Interestingly, it also has a website specifically designed for children aged five years and up to 12 years and their teachers. It explains the classifications to children in child-friendly ways and it features interactive games to educate them on the issue of classification, as well as Safer Internet Day crosswords and poster competitions.

Clothing

Following the Bailey Review (2011) and the concern raised about the availability of sexualised clothing and accessories for children, the British Retail Consortium (2011) agreed a set of voluntary good practice guidelines for retailing children's clothes in 2011. The guidelines provide that the retailers' feedback procedures are available on their website and in store. The Bailey (2010) *Review of Progress* report noted that about 51% of the market is covered by these guidelines. Collaborations between industry and campaigning groups (e.g. between the UK website for parents, www.mumsnet.com, and Tesco in the design of children's bras) were also welcomed in this report. Following a review of the guidelines after a period of a year, they were

amended to include advice on boys' clothing and on the avoidance of gender stereotyping. It is proposed in the future to work on including a greater number of signatories to these guidelines and to extend the guidelines to cover toys and games retailing, to challenge gender stereotyping and to encourage body confidence (Department for Education, 2013).

Print material

The Press Complaints Commission (PCC) is an independent body that responds to complaints regarding editorial content of newspapers, magazines and their websites, as well as the conduct of journalists. Its voluntary Code of Practice provides, for example, that children are not to be photographed without parental consent and that they should not have their school day interrupted. Greater efforts have been made to ensure that the Code relating to the display of magazines and newspapers with sexualised images on the covers is being observed, post the Bailey Review (2011). The guidelines in the Code of Practice were updated and distributed to retail outlets and were made available to parents by putting them on the ParentPort website (www.parentport.org.uk). Modesty boards or sleeves to obscure sexualised images on covers made available to retailers from publishers (free of change in some instances) have experienced low take-up. Retailers blame publishers of certain magazines for not making them free of charge and for thus not honouring the commitment they made to the Bailey Review (2011).

There is also a Teenage Magazine Arbitration Panel (TMAP) in the UK, which is self-regulatory and administers a Code of Practice with regard to sexual subject matter in teenage magazines. For example, the guidelines cover such issues as appropriate display of these magazines, as well as the provision of factually accurate and suitable advice to teenagers. It has a complaints procedure and produces an annual report providing details of such complaints. It was reported in the TMAP Annual Report 2009/10 that the panel received no official complaints within its remit in 2009.

Outdoor media

Since the Bailey Review (2011), more effort has been put into publicising guidance on sexual imagery directed at the outdoor advertising industry, and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) warned the industry of its intention in the same year to apply the criteria governing imagery more stringently in the future. The Outdoor Media Centre took a number of actions to ensure that advertisers followed the guidelines and showed more caution in placing advertisements.

Music videos

Following the Bailey Review (2011), which documented parental concern about music video clips and which sought age ratings for music videos, the music industry was advised by Government to police itself better or to risk further regulation. The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) announced in 2014 that it was working on an age-rating system for online music videos, on the basis that some contain sexually explicit material or are considered to glamorise behaviour or conduct deemed inappropriate, such as self-harm or drug-taking. It is recognised that for the rating system to be effective, it will have to be supported by filters which can be activated by parents. However, it has also been acknowledged that videos produced outside of the UK context could prove too problematic to include in this system.

Video games

The Video Standards Council (VSC) is the standards body for the video and video games industries in the UK and it operates a Code of Practice designed to ensure that both industries show a duty of care in their dealings with members of the public. It provides its retail members with training online, or in person, to deal with restricted videos, DVDs and video games. Following the Byron Review (2008), Pan European Game Information (PEGI) was given statutory powers to rate games in the UK, and the VSC administers the PEGI system of age rating for video games used in over 30 countries. In fulfilling its role as regulator, it uses the name 'Games Rating Authority'.

Parental awareness measures

ParentPort is a portal launched by the UK's media regulators in 2011 to provide guidance for parents seeking to make complaints (*see* www.parentport.org.uk). It provides a plain English description of the roles of all media regulators and complaints processes. Since 2013, a new section on ParentPort provides top tips to parents on topics such as online safety, social networking, mobile safety, films, advertising and video games. A 'Have Your Say' section on the ParentPort portal (*see* https://www.parentport.org.uk/have-your-say) allows parents to express their views to media regulators without necessarily having to make a complaint.

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) also established a parents' page on its website and an e-leaflet designed to improve parental knowledge of the regulatory landscape (*see* http://www.asa.org.uk/Consumers/Parents-Page.aspx). A Digital Advice Parent Pack, paid for by industry and developed with input from others (Family and Parenting Institute, Agnes Nairn and Reg Bailey), was launched in 2012, as was a Media Smart Body Image Parent Pack designed to support parents to provide home-based education on body image to children between the ages of six and 11 years. Links to these resources are provided on the ParentPort website.

Data protection

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) sets out guidance on the interpretation and application of the principles specified in data protection legislation. When the data subject is a child (who because of his/her status is unlikely to be party to a contract), the child has to have consented to the processing of the data, or the processing is deemed necessary to comply with a legal obligation or to protect a child's interests. The ICO Code of Practice on *'personal information online'* advises that the general rule is that personal data should only be collected from a child with the '*explicit and verifiable consent*' of a parent/guardian, unless that child is aged 12 years or over (ICO, 2010, p. 9). Age verification of young people under the age of 18 years using the Internet has been acknowledged as a complicated issue requiring a global solution in the Bailey Review *Progress Report* (Department for Education, 2013). Funding to cover the cost of examining how this issue might be addressed in the future has been promised.

Food products, alcohol, gambling and tobacco

Advertising of food and alcohol has been more strictly regulated in the British context in recent years as a result of concerns about alcohol consumption and binge drinking among young people, as well as the relatively high rate of childhood obesity. The advertising of foods high in fat, sugar and salt (nutrient profile model) is banned by statutory regulation on TV programmes for children aged under 16 years. The use of nutrition and health claims, promotional offers, and celebrities and licensed characters in advertisements for high-fat, salt, sugar foods targeted at children under the age of 12 years are all restricted. In January

2014, the discount supermarket chain Lidl undertook an initiative to ban the sale of sweets and chocolate from checkout displays in stores and to replace these products with alternative, healthy foods (Bennett, 2014). Other supermarket chains made commitments to limit the display of such products at checkouts. This was in response to the UK's Department of Health demanding more action from retailers and suppliers to promote the sale of healthy foods and to better assist consumers to make healthy choices. Other initiatives being taken in Britain include cardboard cut-outs of local GPs in supermarkets reminding shoppers to buy fruit and vegetables, and the development of an app providing shoppers with accurate nutritional information about a product before they buy it.

Advertising for weight control and slimming products and medicines are also tightly regulated in the UK, so that they are not targeted at under-18 year-olds. The same applies to gambling advertisements. However, since the Gambling Act 2005 came into force in 2007, gambling advertising was permitted across all media. A new voluntary Code of Conduct for betting shops was introduced on 1 March 2014 and the British Government indicated that more measures are likely to be undertaken to introduce further regulation in the industry, such as making the Code mandatory and banning betting machine advertising in shop windows, as well as initiatives to ensure that people do not spend too much on betting machines too quickly. The Government also requested that the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) review the codes for gambling advertising to explore if change is needed (Davy, 2014). This was prompted by research findings showing that gambling advertising on television had increased 600% between 2006 and 2012, and that people aged under 16 years were exposed, on average, to 211 advertisements each (Sweney, 2013).

Advertising cigarettes and tobacco products is illegal in the UK, although limited opportunities remain in non-broadcast media to advertise rolling papers and filters. Advertisements broadcast must not refer to tobacco or smoking unless such references are made in the context of an anti-smoking or anti-drugs message.

Media literacy

In November 2012, the ASA Regulator launched Ad:Check, which is a resource for use in secondary schools. This provides an opportunity for young people to engage with real-life advertising case studies to help them explore topical and controversial issues within the context of their rights, responsibilities, duties and freedoms, and to make critical assessments of the advertisements they see and hear (ASA, 2012). The Responsible Advertising and Children (RAC) Programme, which represents advertisers, agencies and media, favours self-regulation and education/media literacy as the main approaches to addressing challenges relating to advertising directed at children. Through this programme, more media literacy material aimed at both parents and children has been made available. Media Smart®, for example, launched its media literacy programme in the UK in 2002, designed for use with school students aged 6-11 years. It has also been developed and promoted in a number of other countries throughout Europe. While some welcome this initiative as a positive demonstration of the marketing industry's social responsibility, critics of Media Smart® view it as a consumer socialisation programme rather than a media literacy programme designed to pre-empt tighter regulation of the industry (O'Sullivan, 2007). Indeed, an analysis of the public discourse on the launch and early operation of Media Smart® reveals how it acted as a focus for an emotive and divisive debate on advertising to children (*ibid*).

Ofcom and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) have also been encouraged, following the Bailey Review (2011) and the Bailey Review *Progress Report* (Department for Education, 2013) to promote media literacy and to work towards establishing minimum standards for effective materials, so that parents, children and schools have access to the best products in the media literacy field.

5.3   Finland

Finland is generally perceived as a relatively gender and income egalitarian, stable welfare society where families are fairly well supported in parenting and childcare arrangements (Laukkanen *et al*, 2014). Finland is in the top one-third of countries in the UNICEF rankings of child well-being in industrialised countries (UNICEF Office of Research, 2013). Its population is relatively homogeneous and predominantly urban. Finland is also identified with having a historically and culturally embedded savings and frugal spending ideology, to the extent that conspicuous consumption is perceived as immoral (Autio and Heinonen, 2004). However, the extent to which contemporary children and young people are still governed by this ideology is a point of discussion (Autio and Heinonen, 2004; Wilska, 2002). It is argued that since the 1980s, with the rise of consumer culture and the expansion of the middle class, enjoyment of consumption coupled with responsibility are now integral features of Finnish consumer culture (Autio and Heinonen, 2004).

Manuel Castells (2000) identified Finland as the first real 'information society'. The Internet is part of the lives of the youngest of children (Suoninen and the Finnish Youth Research Society, 2013). There is very high mobile phone diffusion among the child and youth population, with mobile phones being commonly bought by parents for children as young as seven years of age (Wilska and Pedrozo, 2007; Suoninen and the Finnish Youth Research Society, 2013). Nordic State feminism (i.e. Nordic governments' strong gender equality agenda) is often used to make distinctions between Nordic and other European countries. While Finland is often viewed as a relatively classless, gender egalitarian society, social class and gender-based differences have been noted in the cultural practices and lifestyles of young people (Wilska, 2005; Tolonen, 2013). Sexualisation in Nordic countries, as in others, is predominantly perceived negatively, as unambiguously commercial and anti-feminist, yet there also exists a minority view that mainstream sexualisation holds feminist potential (Mühleisen, 2007).

Legislation

Privacy and the protection of children from advertising are high priorities in the Finnish context. The Consumer Protection Act (38/1978) prohibits unfair or inappropriate conduct in marketing (Segercrantz and Laes, 2013). Key principles in the legislation are that marketing cannot be aggressive and that it should be clearly recognisable as such. This legislation is also supported by provisions in other laws, which also place restrictions on marketing to minors. It is the responsibility of the Finnish Consumer Ombudsman, who operates in association with the Finnish Competition and Consumer Authority (FCCA), to monitor observation of the provisions of the legislation. To assist this process, the Ombudsman provides guidelines for advertising professionals on marketing to minors. These are very extensive and put restrictions on, for example, collectors' series being advertised with foodstuffs, where collecting becomes the main preoccupation of the child and this puts pressure on parents. Competitions and lotteries focused on children are also restricted, as is the use of cartoon figures or children's heroes to sell unhealthy products (FCCA, 2013). While Finnish authorities tend to differentiate between very small children, children and youth, they do so without specifying any age criteria, and individuals under the age of 18 years are deemed incompetent to enter into most agreements, at least without the consent of a guardian (Segercrantz and Laes, 2013). The implication for advertisers is that products or services deemed unusual or too expensive for children to buy with their own money should not be marketed to this group (*ibid*). The Guardianship Services Act (442/1999) states that minors can only enter insignificant or minor financial transactions, and all others require consent from a guardian.

Direct marketing

The Finnish Direct Marketing Association has a Code of Practice on direct marketing (FCCA, 2014). Direct marketing material cannot be sent to persons under 15 years without their parents' consent, and furthermore, this requirement cannot be circumvented by sending parents promotional material for goods or services that appeal to children under 15 years of age. Direct marketing to those aged 15-18 years also has to be treated with considerable caution.

Food, drinks and tobacco advertising

There are restrictions on marketing of foods to children. Advertisers are not permitted to give false impressions to children, for example that eating reduces loneliness or that by consuming food products they can acquire friends (FCCA, 2014). Decisions made by the Consumer Ombudsman in relation to particular advertisements targeting children reflect the view that impressions cannot be given that certain foods have health benefits if they have not and that advertising should not make children weight conscious or appearance conscious. Furthermore, advertisers are warned that children should not be made too excited about unhealthy foods (Segercrantz and Laes, 2013; FCCA, 2014).

Alcohol may not be marketed to minors at all. Furthermore, only low-strength alcohol products can be advertised in Finland, as set out in the Alcohol Act (1143/1994) and such advertising cannot be aimed at minors or contain depictions of young people. Additional and much more extensive restrictions on alcohol advertising on TV, in social media, in public places and on consumer participation in alcohol advertising came into effect in 2015 as a result of legislative amendments.

Tobacco products cannot be marketed in Finland to any audience, and candy products packaged like cigarettes are also prohibited. Cigarette vending machines are due to be banned in 2015. The marketing of medicinal products to minors is prohibited by legislation (Medicines Act 395/1987) (Segercrantz and Laes, 2013).

Marketing and schooling

In 1997, the Consumer Ombudsman issued guidelines on what was appropriate for schools in relation to sponsorship, marketing and other such activities (Consumer Agency and Ombudsman, 1997). In 2004, the Finnish National Board of Education, in conjunction with the Consumer Agency Ombudsman, issued a memo setting out further guidance for schools in terms of how they should relate to business, including marketing and sponsorship (Finnish National Board of Education and the Consumer Agency Ombudsman, 2004). Both of these documents ensured that schools were made very aware that they have to observe the law in their practices in these fields. The documents also put considerable emphasis on parent consultation before schools engage in any commercial activity.

Magazines

The Finnish Periodical Publishers' Association has published a Code of Conduct on how magazines should ensure the recognisability of advertising and this code has been welcomed by the Consumer Ombudsman (FCCA, 2014). 'Advertorials' (advertisements that resemble editorial content) were deemed to be in breach of a requirement of the Consumer Protection legislation by not clearly highlighting their commercial purpose. It is now a requirement that if an advertisement resembles editorial content in a magazine, it has to include the text 'advertisement' in a way that is very visible. The Code also requires that there is no hidden advertising in magazine articles and that any content produced in cooperation with a company must be clearly stated to the reader. It is intended that such provisions will also extend to online material, as companies marketing through blogs or professional bloggers were reminded to take into account the requirements of the Consumer Protection legislation on making advertising clearly recognisable (FCCA, 2014).

Media literacy/education

There is a strong emphasis in Finland on education focused on consumer skills and media literacy. The development of media education in early childhood education and care has been a policy focus since 2004, alongside the intention to protect minors from harmful audiovisual content (Rantala, 2011). In 2012, there were calls by the FCCA to ensure that consumer skills education is systematically embedded in the basic curriculum for young students. It was

argued that the emphasis needed to be on the acquisition of practical skills on the use of money and resources in the home, as well as on choosing and using technology and media responsibly. The argument made was that this kind of education ties in with the prevention of financial problems and social exclusion among young people, as well as the promotion of active citizenship and entrepreneurship.

Similar themes are also mentioned in the Ministry of Education and Culture's *National Policy Guidelines for Good Media Literacy*, covering the period 2013-2016. A new agency – the National Audiovisual Institute – was formed in 2014 as a result of a merger between the National Audiovisual Archive (formerly Finnish Film Archive, established 1957) and the Finnish Board of Film Classification and its short-lived successor, the Centre for Media Education and Audiovisual Media (2012-2014). It promotes media education in the Finnish context. The Ministry's policy builds on media education currently undertaken in schools, public libraries and youth work centres, and the key focus of the policy is children and young people. The policy promises resources for a high-standard, up-to-date, research-driven knowledge base for media literacy education, starting with under-three-year-olds. The policy document recognises that media literacy is a significant part of the EU agenda, as well as other countries' agendas, in recent years. While the policy guidelines are not very specific on the detail, progress on key goals is to be monitored by expert panels and a new policy is promised, in order to to sustain developments from 2017 onwards (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013).

5.4   Australia

As in the UK, the attention given to the commercialisation and sexualisation of children has been intense in Australia and has been the subject of much contestation. The two reports by Rush and La Nauze (2006a and 2006b) moved the themes directly into the political spotlight in 2006. In 2007, the Senate passed a motion noting the harmful effects of the sexualisation of children in the media, and the Senate Standing Committee on the Environment, Communications and the Arts (ECA) led an inquiry into the sexualisation of children, the main objective of which was to examine potential changes to the systems of advertising regulation in Australia. In 2008 the Senate ECA Committee issued its report, and the Australian Government published a response to this report in 2009. A new National Classification Scheme was recommended following a Senate Committee review and report in 2011, which questioned the effectiveness of the scheme, as it was, to prevent the sexualisation of children and objectification of women in media and advertising (Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, 2011).

Concern with the sexualisation and related commercialisation of childhood is evident in Parliamentary reports and public discourses, but also at well-attended public meetings organised in different cities (Baird, 2013). A number of reports since 2006, including one on sexualisation completed by the Commmission for Children and Young People in Western Australia in 2014, have promised more regulatory research and policy work in the future to address issues raised. Aside from the features of the Australian debate also evident in other contexts, the national and cultural specifics of the sexualisation discourse as it is manifest in the Australian context have also been explored. For example, Baird (2013) argued that, based on her research, the Australian sexualisation discourse may be understood as part of a national response to crises caused by revelations of institutional child sexual abuse and the cruelty meted out by successive governments to indigenous children and their families throughout the 20th century.

Consumer protection legislation

In 2011, a new Australian Consumer Law (ACL) was enacted. This replaced a number of other consumer laws with a single national system. The ACL applies more broadly to all persons as well as corporations. It contains a range of consumer protection provisions (Le Guay and

Choong, 2012). It introduces new powers for a number of authorities and it makes provision for the application of civil remedies as well as criminal sanctions. The Lotteries and Art Unions Regulation (2007) (New South Wales) prohibits publication of lottery advertising that depicts children participating (*ibid*).

Broadcasting

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is a statutory authority responsible for promoting self-regulation and competition in the communications industry. It assists television, radio and Internet industries in developing Codes of Practice, and it develops and administers programme standards. The existence of the Children's Television Standards (CTS) reflects the special consideration given to children in such areas as advertising and the presentation of material that might be harmful to them. These standards were updated in 2009 to strengthen earlier provisions and now distinguish between C Programmes (for children aged up to 14 years) and P Programmes (for pre-school children). The C and P classifications also establish specific broadcast time bands, which are subject to a range of content and other restrictions, including some of the following: what is considered suitable material for programmes and advertisements; giving or offering prizes; separation of advertising and sponsorship announcements; content of advertisements; undue pressure in advertisements; clarity of presentation in advertising; disclaimers and premium offers; competitions; endorsements by programme characters; and alcohol advertising (ACMA, 2009). No advertising is permitted during programmes for pre-school children (Le Guay and Choong, 2012).

Despite the evidence submitted to the Senate enquiry that music video clips contributed to the sexualisation of children, and the resulting recommendation that broadcasters review their classification with regard to sexualising imagery, the Australian Government did not endorse this recommendation on the basis that the low level of complaints about music videos provided no justification for such an action (Statham *et al*, 2011). A parental lock is a required feature of all digital receivers sold in Australia since 2011. This feature allows parents/guardians to control children's access to TV programmes, and is based on programme classifications.

Commercial television industry's Code of Practice

Developed by Free TV Australia, the relevant industry group, this Code of Practice was introduced in 2010 and represents all of Australia's commercial television broadcasting licensees (Statham *et al*, 2011). The purpose of the Code is to regulate the content of commercial television in accordance with the prevailing community standards and to enable viewers to make informed choices relating to their own and their children's TV viewing. The Code also assists in the regulation of the classification and placement of commercials and community service announcements. All commercials and 'infomercials' have to be classified by Commercials Advice Pty Ltd. (CAD) in accordance with the Code. In relation to children, the CAD checklist confirms the requirement to comply with the ACMA's CTS (2009). Details and resources pertaining to the parental lock function are available on the Free TV website to enable parents to control what their children watch on TV (*see* www.freetv.com.au).

Subscription television

The Subscription Television Code (SBTC) has been developed by the Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association (ASTRA) (Le Guay and Choong, 2012). This code imports the provisions of the Australian Association of National Advertisers' (AANA) Code of Ethics, the AANA Children's Code and the AANA Food and Beverages Code. A particular section of the SBTC specifically deals with advertising to children (aged under 14 years) and another section requires licensees to take account of the intellectual and emotional maturity of its intended audience when scheduling advertisements (Le Guay and Choong, 2012).

Mobile technology

The Mobile Premium Services Code 2011, developed by Communications Alliance Limited, is administered by the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman. The Code prohibits advertisements for premium messaging services specifically targeting children below the age of 15 years. In addition, if the message is likely to attract a significant number of people aged under 18 years, it has to include a warning on the advertisement to the effect '*If you are under 18 you must ask the account holder before using this service*' (Le Guay and Choong, 2012: 411).

Direct marketing

The Direct Marketing Code of Practice 2006 was developed and is administered by the Australian Direct Marketing Association (ADMA). It relates to the collection of information from children and to the content of commercial communications directed at them. The provisions are concerned with prohibiting exploitation of children or taking advantage of their vulnerabilities, as well as with avoiding conflict between minors and parents/guardians. The Code requires notification that parental consent is required and should be given when personal information is being collected (Le Guay and Choong, 2012).

Internet

The Internet Industry Association (IIA) Code of Practice Content Services Code 2008 applies to all those service providers (hosting service, live content service, links and commercial content) who have an Australian connection. These providers are obliged to promote online safety, including information and advice to parents to deal with safety issues associated with, and controlling access to, content (e.g. chat services) and the use of warnings and safety information for age-restricted access content.

In addition, the IIA Code for Industry Co-Regulation in Areas of Internet and Mobile Content 2005 requires mobile carriers and content providers to take reasonable steps to provide end-users with information about methods of supervising and controlling children's access to mobile content. It also contains provisions requiring content hosts and mobile carriers to take reasonable steps to ensure that restricted content is not provided to persons aged under 18 years. Furthermore, it requires Internet service providers to take reasonable steps to ensure that Internet access accounts are not provided to minors without the consent of responsible adults (Le Guay and Choong, 2012).

Radio

The Commercial Radio Codes of Practice and Guidelines 2011 are binding on all commercial radio licensees, and the treatment of children (aged under 16 years) in a demeaning or exploitative manner is prohibited by this code of practice. Furthermore, a programme including a sexually explicit theme can only be broadcast between the hours of 9.30pm and 5.00am and must have appropriate warnings. Advertising on radio has to comply with all other relevant codes of practice as far as they are applicable (Le Guay and Choong, 2012).

Print, film, video and DVD

The Australian Classification Board is responsible for print, film, video and DVD media. It administers the criteria set out in legislation (the Classification Publications, Films and Computer Games Act 1995 enforced by the Classifications Enforcement Act) for each State and Territory, as well as the National Classification Code and guidelines (Le Guay and Choong, 2012). The inquiry led by the Senate Standing Committee on the Environment, Communications and the Arts (*see above*) received very little evidence that film and DVDs were considered sources of inappropriate sexualisation of children (Statham *et al*, 2011).

Some concern was raised about teenage magazines in terms of their sexual content at the Senate Inquiry. The Inquiry suggested classifying these publications and urged publishers to provide more advice on magazine covers, indicating any content that might be considered inappropriate for children. However, this was not subsequently pursued on the basis that it would be too difficult for publishers (Statham *et al*, 2011).

Self-regulation by industry

Self-regulation by industry-specific Codes of Practice or Guidelines is very strong in the Australian context (Statham *et al*, 2011; Le Guay and Choong, 2012). The Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) is the key advertising industry body and it developed an Advertisers' Code of Ethics in 1999. In 2006, it introduced a specific Food and Beverage Code and in 2008 a Children's Code. Both codes are incorporated into AANA's general Code of Ethics (which itself was updated in 2012). The Advertising Standards Bureau (ASB) is charged with administration of the Code.

The AANA Children's Code is directed primarily at people aged 14 years and younger, and has provisions that include compliance with prevailing community standards; factual presentation of material; product placement; use of sexual imagery or sexualisation of children; safety; social values; parental authority; accuracy; use of qualifying statements; competitions; use of popular personalities; premium offers; alcohol; privacy; and food and beverages. In relation to sexualisation, the Children's Code requires that advertising or marketing to children (on TV, online or in print) must not include sexual imagery in contravention of prevailing community standards, nor state or imply that children are sexual beings or that ownership or enjoyment of a product will enhance sexuality. There are more stringent provisions outlined in relation to advertising directed at children aged 14 years and younger (AANA, 2009). The AANA has also produced guidelines for industry on good practice in digital marketing and in managing images of children and young people.

Food and beverages

The Australian Food and Grocery Council developed the Responsible Children's Marketing Initiative (RCMI), which came into effect in 2009. It is also administered by the Advertising Standards Bureau (ASB). Participants agree not to advertise food and beverage products to under-12 year-olds in the media unless they represent healthy dietary choices (consistent with scientific or Australian Government standards and the advertising/marketing activities reference) or are in the context of a healthy lifestyle designed to appeal to the audience through messaging that encourages good dietary habits and physical activity. The RCMI also sets out guidelines relating to the use of popular personalities and licensed characters, product placement, use of products in interactive games, advertising in schools and use of premium offers (Le Guay and Choong, 2012).

Australian Quick Service Restaurant Industry Initiative

The Australian Food and Grocery Council, in cooperation with the AANA, also developed the Quick Service Restaurant Industry (QSRI) Initiative, which commenced in 2009 (Le Guay and Choong, 2012). A number of leading quick-service restaurants (e.g. McDonald's, KFC, Pizza Hut) are participants. They are obliged in their advertising and marketing communications to children under 14 years to represent healthier choices as determined by a defined set of nutritional criteria and/or to represent a healthy lifestyle by encouraging healthier choices and physical activity. The QSRI Initiative also contains a number of other provisions included in the Responsible Children's Marketing Initiative (RCMI – *see above*), which relate to the use of popular personalities and licensed characters, product placement and advertising in schools. It also makes additional provisions relating to on-pack nutrition labelling and availability of nutritional information. A new version of the QSRI Initiative came into effect in 2012, making it a requirement that advertising and marketing messages to children represent healthier choices and a healthy lifestyle (Le Guay and Choong, 2012).

Alcohol and tobacco

The Alcohol Beverages Advertising (and Packaging) Code 2009 is a self-regulatory code governing alcohol advertising. Advertising with a strong or evident appeal to children or young people is prohibited and adults featured in alcohol advertising have to be aged 25 years or over. Children or adolescents appearing in advertisements must only appear in particular ways and not as consumers or servers of beverages. Tobacco advertising is generally prohibited, and the legislation in place is designed to limit exposure of children and young people to any form of persuasion to smoke. The legislation also prohibits the association of smoking with success, either socially or in business or in sporting prowess (Le Guay and Choong, 2012).

Billboard and outdoor advertising

The placement of billboards and other outdoor advertising is under the jurisdiction of local councils and/or State governing bodies. Despite the Senate Inquiry recommending more stringent application of standards to outdoor advertising by the Advertising Standards Bureau (ASB) on the basis that this was unsolicited or unavoidable material, the Government responded that this was not appropriate or necessary. Recently, however, the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) has been resisting attempts by the Queensland Parliament to take over the regulation of outdoor advertising in that State. The Inquiry into Sexually Explicit Outdoor Advertising by the Health and Community Services Committee (HCSC) in 2014 recommended a legislated Code of Ethics (light touch co-regulation) to prevent children from being exposed to sexual material, and to keep standards in line with community views. While the content of the report of the HCSC was viewed as balanced, the AANA held that this recommendation was heavy-handed and unnecessary on the basis that the Inquiry report also found that self-regulation in the area of outdoor advertising was working well (AANA, 2014).

Therapeutic goods

The Therapeutic Goods Advertising Code 2007 is mandatory and regulates advertising of therapeutic products. It prohibits the advertising of therapeutic goods (tampons, acne medications, sunscreens, condoms and personal lubricants) to persons aged under 18 years except as specified (Le Guay and Choong, 2012).

Data protection and privacy

In Australia an annual Data Privacy Day and a dedicated Privacy Awareness Week is organised by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) and is designed to alert people to their privacy rights. The Privacy Act 1988 has been amended and this new legislative provision commenced in March 2014. The new laws apply to Government agencies, private sector businesses and not-for profit organisations covered by the Privacy Act 1988. The aim of the amended legislation is to enhance and strengthen people's privacy rights in areas such as direct marketing, the disclosure of personal information overseas and requesting access to, and correction of, personal information held by an organisation. As a result of the new provision, it is anticipated that Australians will be better facilitated to ask an organisation where they collected their personal information from (in response to receiving direct marketing), opt out of receiving direct marketing communications from organisations, find out if their personal information will be sent overseas, request access to their personal information held by an organisation or agency, and request a correction to their personal information held by an organisation or agency (OAIC, 2014).

Education and literacy initiatives

Australia has a long tradition of media education in schools. The Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) is a not-for-profit organisation of media educators and industry professionals who support work in this field. There are also media literacy initiatives and activities to protect children from influences considered harmful, including sexualisation, and a number of these

are aimed at assisting parents. The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is also required by law to raise awareness of the potential risks associated with the Internet and how to manage them. It manages an online safety awareness programme for children, young people, parents, teachers and library staff called 'Cybersmart' (*see* https://www.esafety.gov.au).

5.5 Canada

According to Statham *et al* (2009), Canada is often cited as a country with a highly developed regulatory system where advertising to children is concerned. There are two systems in place. One system in Quebec bans all commercial advertising to children aged under 13 years by legislation, which came into force in 1980; the second system operates in the other provinces of Canada where a strong system of self-regulation exists. Broadcast advertising to children has traditionally been very extensively regulated in Canada. Media literacy is also promoted as a proactive way of educating children about the media. Much attention has been given to cyberbullying in a number of Canadian provinces, with Nova Scotia viewed as taking the lead in expanding responsibility beyond educational actors to others, including Internet service providers and cellular phone companies. In the same jurisdiction, cyberbullying was criminalised as a result of the Cyber-safety Act 2013 (Feltrin, 2013). The sexualisation of girls is a theme evident in media discourse and since 2005 there is a significant focus on children's use of technology in Canadian policy discussion (Draper, 2012).

Advertising (broadcast and other media)

In Canada (with the exception of Quebec), the Canadian Radio, Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is charged with the regulation of broadcast advertising to children as a condition of broadcast licence. Children's advertising is defined as any paid commercial messages carried during children's programming and any commercial messages directed at children (aged under 12 years) whether broadcast during children's programming or not. An industry-developed set of standards, the Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children (Children's Code), is accepted by the CRTC and it has 14 provisions covering such issues as factual presentation, safety, scheduling, use of programme characters and personal endorsements (ASC, 2010). Broadcasters have voluntarily agreed to restrict themselves to an eight-minute limit for advertising on children's programmes, although 12 minutes is permitted by law. Pre-clearance is required for every advertisement to children before it is aired and this task is undertaken by a sub-committee of Advertising Standards Canada (ASC), a partnership of advertising industry and media organisations (Statham *et al*, 2011). Approved commercials must be resubmitted after a year for reassessment to accommodate changing social values. Although pre-clearance is not required for non-broadcast forms of advertising, a pre-clearance service can be provided for a fee (Statham *et al*, 2011).

The Canadian Code of Advertising Standards provides a complaints-based system of response for all advertising to children, which is monitored by the ASC. One complaint can trigger a review of an advertisement, although complaints are few and at the time of Statham *et al*'s review (2011) none had been upheld. This is viewed by the ASC as an indication of its success in pre-clearance, but others argue that it best indicates the weakness of self-regulation and particularly in relation to food advertising (Statham *et al*, 2011).

In the case of Quebec, where advertising is addressed to both children and parents, such advertisements can only be broadcast during programmes for which children aged between two and 11 years comprise not more than 15% of the audience. There are exemptions from the ban, allowing advertising targeting children aged under 13 years, such as in children's magazines, advertising a children's programme and in-store promotions. The ban does not apply to signals originating outside of Quebec that are retransmitted by cable TV companies,

such as advertising from English-speaking Canada and the USA (Statham *et al*, 2011). It has been found that the ban is more effective with French-speaking rather than English-speaking children, possibly explained by English-speaking children's greater exposure to American TV (Statham *et al*, 2011). One study found that the ban reduced fast food consumption, particularly in French-speaking households, highlighting its effectiveness (Dhar and Baylis, 2011). However, the researchers urged caution, suggesting that media overlap reduces the impact of such a ban, so that pursuing it at country level, without support from other jurisdictions, is unlikely to yield results.

The Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) is an independent, self-regulatory body administering the standards of its members – Canada's private broadcasters. It has four codes covering ethics, violence, sex role portrayal and journalism ethics. There is also an age-based programme classification system for TV programmes (*see* http://www.cbsc.ca/english/agvot/englishsystem.php).

Food and beverage advertising

Since 2007, the food and beverage industry in Canada has taken stronger regulatory action, shifting its focus in advertising to healthier food options or choosing not to advertise to children aged under 12 years at all. The promotion of healthy lifestyle choices is also a commitment made by companies in the interactive games they host on their websites (Bates, 2009).

Internet and interactive media

Canada operates a voluntary regulatory approach to content on the Internet, which focuses mostly on preventing child pornography. Project Cleanfeed is a Government-approved voluntary collaboration between media companies providing Internet access. It relies on members of the public, or individual authorities, to notify assessors when questionable images or content are found online. Two analysts assess the content and make a decision to approve or reject it. If a site is blacklisted, the URL is added to the Cleanfeed list, which is sent to all Internet service providers who have voluntarily committed to block sites on the list (*see* https://www.cybertip.ca/app/en/projects-cleanfeed).

Data protection

Canadian data protection laws do not expressly deal with children's privacy rights, but do require organisations to make their information practices transparent and to obtain parental consent for the collection of information from minors. Giving consent must be easy and accessible, and children's data cannot be collected, because they cannot be expected to give consent.

Film, video and DVD

There is a unified rating system for home videos, which is generated by averaging classifications given in five provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Maritimes, Ontario) of Canada. There is no national classification system for films in Canada and the system developed for videos is utilised for films. In Quebec, the classification system is different from the system that is in place in the rest of Canada, and it rates all films and videos. Canada is quite unusual in that video-on-demand services have to be licensed by the CRTC and are subject to the same regulations as broadcast services and are not allowed to carry advertising.

Media literacy

Concerned Children's Advertisers CCA, a non-profit organisation, was established in 1990 and comprises toy companies, food manufacturers and children's broadcasters. It produces public service announcements on a range of issues as well as national educational programmes delivered free to educators, parents and students. The 'TV&ME' literacy and lifeskills programme developed in Canada is a recommended resource in Canadian schools and was used as a template to develop the UK's Media Smart® initiative, discussed in Section 5.2 above (Statham *et al*, 2011). The Media Awareness Network (MNet), an independent non-profit organisation established in Canada in 1996, raises awareness through media literacy and digital literacy programmes. MNet was established by the Association of Media Literacy, founded in 1978 and involving teachers, librarians, consultants, parents, cultural workers and media professionals. It successfully lobbied for media studies in the basic curriculum, as well as in every English course at secondary level. It has a website (http://mediasmarts.ca/) providing resources and tools in French and English, one of which is the Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children translated into child-friendly language. MNet also conducts research tracking young people's use of, and attitudes towards, the Internet.

5.6   Summary

The age at which it is appropriate to advertise to children, or the ages at which children are sufficiently competent to understand advertising, or to manage their sexualities, are debated. Although 12 years was seen as an appropriate age limit for traditional advertising and seemed to be the age adopted in policy in some countries, it has been increasingly argued that this age should be raised to 16 years in view of the growth of digital marketing strategies (Clarke and Svanaes, 2012). In the UK, age 16 years and under is identified as the period during which children are in need of most protection by codes of regulation (Department of Education, 2013). However, as demonstrated in the discussion above on other jurisdictions, different protections are afforded to different age groups in different countries and, indeed, within specific contexts. In Australia, some Codes of Practice make provisions for 12-year-olds and under, while others apply to 14-year-olds and under. Clearly, this poses challenges for navigating the regulatory landscape for industry, parents and young people.

Australia and the UK both have extensive regulatory infrastructures, which involve a number of self-regulatory codes. The complexity this creates can, it is claimed, make it difficult for consumers to decide whether a breach of a code has occurred. Consequently, the number of complaints may be minimised by the system, which largely depends on complaints to alert bodies to possible breaches. In this context, ParentPort in the UK represents an important development in terms of assisting parents to better negotiate a complicated regulatory system. In Australia, the establishment of an industry complaints clearinghouse has also been recommended in order to simplify the system and to facilitate people to make a complaint.

A common feature of the regulatory scene in many of the countries reviewed in this study is increasing demands being placed on regulatory bodies by governments, campaigning groups and other stakeholders. These demands emerge as a result of reviews and progress reports on reviews, and in response to the identification of new challenges (e.g. digital media) or concerning trends (e.g. obesity). The Nordic countries, which have a strong tradition of protecting children from commercialisation, are finding it increasingly difficult in a globalised capitalist landscape to maintain their traditional national arrangements or to institute new arrangements (e.g. ban on online pornography). As can be seen, the regulation of advertising and marketing to children has gained significant momentum in recent years in Australia and also in the UK, where it is high on the political agenda and shows no sign of abating.

At the same time and in keeping with neoliberal governmentality, countries studied have put more effort into educating parents and children, in many instances urging them to take greater control or responsibility in relation to what they want, and do not want, if they wish to live in societies which are family-friendly. Along with initiatives designed to raise awareness, parents and children are also expected (and being enabled by various stakeholders) to exercise greater control and responsibility in a range of different ways (e.g. parental locks, online protection software, using classification guides). Media and digital literacy is on the policy agenda in all countries studied and has been for some time. For example, in Finland, where media literacy education is provided from an early age, there is a designated agency with responsibility for such education and a dedicated policy to promote it. Indeed, all the countries studied place an emphasis on education and predominantly self-regulatory (but also co-regulatory) mechanisms where the protection of children is concerned, in terms of addressing emerging challenges posed by increasingly diverse, globalised, commercialised and sexualised landscapes.

6. Parents' perspectives on the commercialisation and sexualisation of children

In this chapter, the study's findings on the perspectives of parents on issues pertaining to the commercialisation and sexualisation of children are presented and discussed. These views were predominantly ascertained during interview and focus group discussions, with a small number obtained by e-mails from participants to the Research Team following their participation in the fieldwork. A profile of the parents interviewed is given in Appendix 1 and the topic guide for interviews is provided in Appendix 4.

The chapter is divided into five main sections:

> Section 6.1 explores **parents' understanding of the terms 'commercialisation' and 'sexualisation'**. The semi-structured schedule used across focus groups and individual interviews (*see Appendix 4*) deliberately began by asking parents to articulate what these terms meant to them (if anything). As a qualitative strategy in the fieldwork context, rather than merely 'canvassing opinion', the Research Team used such questions to value parents' individual life experiences. These initial questions provided an entry point to more in-depth discussion, ultimately allowing us to generate rich data, identify patterns and divergences in the experiences of parents as a social group, and illustrate the bodies of knowledge and parenting practices (or 'know-how') socially available (or indeed unavailable) to certain parents to negotiate these issues. Such bodies of knowledge and practice (or *discourses*) significantly drew on communications media (TV, print and online news) and fellow adults who constructed childhood, sexuality, gender and consumer activity in particular ways. Given that the data indicated a particular focus among parents on the question of sexualisation, this section explores their framings and complex experiences of this issue in particular.

> Section 6.2 highlights the most prominent **sites and modes of sexualisation** addressed by parents in interviews and focus groups.

> Section 6.3 focuses more directly on **parents' practical interactions** with their children with regard to questions of commercial activity, sexual identity, body image, etc. As this discussion demonstrates, alongside bodies of knowledge, finances and institutional support (e.g. schools) were important to parents' positions and experiences of certain issues.

> Section 6.4 examines **parents' views on questions of support, intervention and regulation** with respect to child-rearing, children's well-being and children's rights in complex, consumerist and image-focused societies. We document parents' experiences of making complaints and explore the various positions taken up by parents on questions of social, corporate, institutional and individual responsibility.

> Section 6.5 explores **parental perspectives on policy responses** to commercialisation and sexualisation of children.

6.1 Parents' broad understandings of commercialisation and sexualisation

Echoing research from other jurisdictions, a strong theme that emerged from parents in this study was the pervasiveness and intensification of commodified and image-based phenomena in childhood: clothing, food, television, leisure activities, among others (Attwood, 2006; Buckingham, 2011). As one parent, Claire, commented, 'I suppose commercialisation to me means that everything can be sold. Everything can be packaged and sold'. But different positions were adopted on this 'wallpaper' of children's lives (Bailey 2011), sometimes simultaneously by the same person or within the same focus group. Consumer activity was personalised as a routine, negotiated feature of daily living regardless of age, while at the same time being identified as a point of concern when deemed 'excessive' in relation to 'targeting' children. One parent, Lucy, noted that from the time children come into the world, they are caught up in a web of adult consumption:

'Children are exposed to shopping so early in life. They're being sat in a supermarket trolley and they are just wheeled down and … the front of all the boxes and you have 6,000 different images being thrown at them as they are toddlers … That's what I kind of understand it [commercialisation] as.'

The former discourse of consumer activity as a pervasive fact of *contemporary* everyday living tended to recognise the practical negotiations of parents with their children as co-consumers and often focused on the effects of a consumer world on their own children. The latter discourse of 'excess' and 'targeting' framed consumer activity and sexual identity in terms of a concern about an exploitative society on the part of media and corporations, and excessive and uncontrolled behaviour on the part of children (in particular girls) and some parents. As discussed below, framings of commercial excess could also draw on a popular discourse that regards certain people as being distasteful consumer-citizens, too materialistic or not respectable in their consumer choices (e.g. those who 'lost control' during the Celtic Tiger 'boom').

Similar to Bragg (2012), use of terms like 'commercialisation' and 'sexualisation' as pertaining to children in parent interviews tend to generate assumptions that these are negative forces, imposing on children aspects of the adult world which they are incompetent or ill-prepared to deal with. As discussed in this chapter, some parents viewed the commercial world as an opportunity for children to learn responsible behaviour, for example, in terms of saving and spending wisely. But participants tended not to identify childhood as a *historical* site of commercial activity, despite evidence to the contrary in the literature (Cook, 2000; Rose, 2010; Buckingham, 2012; O'Halloran, 2014). Neither did they recognise the socialisation of children as (assumed) heterosexuals from a young age. Although sexualisation and commercialisation were perceived as frequently intertwined due to digital media and the sexual nature of many advertisements and cultural products, almost all the parents interviewed perceived sexualisation as a greater and more urgent problem than commercialisation, affecting children's physical, emotional and psychological well-being. In this sense, sexualisation is seen as a set of forces that influence, but are external to, the child. It is viewed as a process that makes young girls more attuned to their own sexualities at increasingly younger ages. In keeping with Gill's (2007) definition of sexualisation as encapsulating '*the increasingly frequent erotic presentation of [predominantly] girls' and women's bodies in public spaces*', one mother proffered a similar understanding of girls 'becoming more aware of their own sexuality and ... skimpy clothes, becoming more ... in tune with make-up and glitter and bling and high heels and everything, which is happening earlier and earlier'.

Some parents referred to what they perceived as the breakdown of social mores and modes of regulation that '*keep the obscene at bay*' (Atwood, 2006). Dermot, the father of three children aged 10-14 years, commented:

> 'You know, maybe we class ourselves as prudes. But there has been an erosion of what you might class, maybe standards ... but with regard to self-respect and so forth ... youngsters going out and the way they're dressed and ... the suggestive nature ... Even 9 o'clock isn't a sufficient time to stop watching telly now for, you know, you're getting hit with it all the time.'

Perhaps the most striking difference between how participants defined commercialisation and sexualisation was the relative gender-neutrality implicit in the former, compared with the almost exclusive focus on girls and clothing in the latter. It was also clear that the mainstream media and popular culture played a significant role in shaping parents' views on these issues. For example, when asked initially about sexualisation, parents tended to cite issues that derived from the more sensational, high-profile media discourses on this topic, such as padded bras and high heels for pre-teens, beauty pageants and the influence of female celebrities such as Miley Cyrus and Rihanna. It is important to note that particular examples cited by parents (including that of Miley Cyrus and the so-called 'Slane girl') were in the media at the time.

The following subsections demonstrate, however, that as discussions developed many parents revealed sexualisation to be a complex and less than straightforward issue in spite of the negative associations drawn frequently between sexualisation and girls in particular. Analysis demonstrated distinctions between issues of sexism, sexual rights in contemporary Ireland and sexual exploitation. Sexual citizenship in a changing Ireland emerged as a theme, while the definition of what is regarded as 'sexual' content in the media was raised, as parents often

113

voiced concerns about other, less sensationalised examples of sexual content to which their children are exposed, such as news on the radio about sexual crimes, child abuse and child pornography. The ubiquity of sexual imagery and children's exposure to it was a consistent theme, with some participants voicing concern about inappropriate music lyrics and chat show content on the radio at all times of the day, as well as in TV, magazine, billboard and Internet advertising. Below, we examine in greater detail the varying aspects of how sexualisation was constructed – and indeed contested – by parents, focusing on issues of sexual identity and citizenship, gender, childhood and risks of exploitation.

The complexities of sexual citizenship: Rights, risks, sexism and sexual exploitation

In the interviews and focus group discussions, parents sometimes granted the status of sexual citizenship to children and young people, and this informed their parenting approach. For example, Aoife favoured compromising with her 13-year-old daughter on the issue of her 'sexualised' clothing because she herself had been guilty of wearing forbidden clothing as a young woman:

> 'I fall into a compromise because I have to say I was guilty of "You're not allowed to wear that" and I'd go down to my friends and I'd get stripped and put the thing on me that I wasn't allowed to wear and I'd go off to … the [name of disco] … Then you'd climb back into a bush on the way home and you'd get back into the clothes you were meant to be wearing. So I was completely guilty of that …'

Lucy, who had two teenage children, voiced the paradoxes of negotiating a changing Ireland. She welcomed the relaxation of social and sexual mores in Irish society as positive for her children as they grew towards adulthood. However, she feared the implications of increasing sexual permissiveness. As she put it:

> 'I'm not telling my children "you must be a virgin when you're married", but what I'm saying to them is … I think there is a sordid degradation in the commercialisation of sex that will actually cause people trauma in their adult lives, and that's what I want my children to avoid. I want them to have a healthy, happy sex life that is guilt-free from the repression of the Catholic Church, but hasn't gone the whole other way, embracing the Hollywood celebrity – "Let me wear nothing but two kind of handkerchiefs stitched together".'

As Lucy's words illustrate, concerns over sexism and sexual exploitation were an undercurrent to the theme of sexual identity and citizenship. However, parents differed on the question of responsibility for the negatives of sexism and exploitation. The sexualisation of girls was interpreted by Áine as a setback for gender equality. She argued, 'Women fought for their right of equality and now they've put themselves right back, degrading themselves'. In relation to children and young people in particular, however, the spectre of sexual abuse was a more common theme.

The framing of dangerous sexual desire on the part of 'knowing' adults, particularly men, played a more central part in parents' concerns about sexualisation. The issue of risk was constantly centralised, with many parents expressing the view that children's clothing, language and physical expression incite the 'inherent' (hetero)sexual gaze and attention of adult males, with attendant dangers of imbalances in experience and power. Edel highlighted the discursive effect of the shift in language from talking about 'dirty old men' in Ireland in the past to that of 'paedophiles' in more recent times, putting parents on the alert to a much greater extent. Many parents were of the view that children were unaware that their clothes or behaviour could be perceived by older teenage males or adult men as inviting sexual attention. As one woman put it in a focus group discussion, 'They're innocent with it, but you know that's not the message they're sending out, which is the problem, isn't it?' and another responded 'That's the danger'.

The perceived extension of the paedophile gaze by technological advances was also part of this framing of sexualisation. Janice, for example, recalled her thoughts after a hip-hop dance in which her daughter was a participant:

> 'I filmed my own daughter, but it was only when I went home, I was thinking "Oh my God, there's so many other people's children here as well … all moving and dancing at the same time" … It was on in a local hotel. Anyone could have walked in the door and paid the €8 … and then you don't know where she's going to end up. You know, you just worry about the Internet these days.'

Parents also reported that they ensured their children wore a swimsuit near pools, in their gardens and on beaches now, as a protective strategy employed in light of greater awareness and acknowledgement of child sexual abuse and the creation of child pornography. One mother, Lucy, who worried about the safety of her 17-year-old daughter, invoked the voluptuous 'femme fatale' archetype (the animated figure of Jessica Rabbit from the film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*) to describe how her daughter dressed:

> 'I always think she's [my daughter] like Jessica Rabbit and Jessica Rabbit says, "I'm not bad. I'm just drawn that way". That's my daughter – she has a very large bust, a tiny waist and a Jennifer Lopez bum. She's also got this really long curly hair and these big lips, and she sticks them out like this [demonstrates]. She wears, quite easily and quite happily, a leopard skin pink bra with a white transparent see-through chiffon blouse and tiny black mini skirt and huge pair of heels, and toddles off down the street.'

Lucy further commented that she might say to her daughter, 'You look amazing. You have an incredible figure. But those clothes make you look like a prostitute'. She also shared her anxiety as to what could happen to her daughter due to her dress: 'I think the negative outcomes of her dressing [like that] are unwanted men's attention. I think that the negative outcomes of her dressing like that is someone grabbing her by the hair and taking her in a door marked "private". That's my greatest fear.'

The issue of how 'knowing' children, and particularly girls, are perceived to be in relation to sexuality by parents is explored in the next section.

Risk, children's identifications and being 'knowingly sexualised'

Closely related to understandings of sexualisation as a process that negatively impacts on children is the notion that it can cut childhood short by pushing children prematurely into engagement with knowledge and practices that are more appropriately the preserve of older teenagers or adults. This is reflected in the above discussion of sexual exploitation and sexual identity, rights and citizenship. Parents were torn between wanting their children to have information to help them understand and avoid sexual dangers, yet also being concerned that the information which could empower children would also render them sexually 'knowing' in a way that made parents uncomfortable.

A very common feature of the interviews and focus group discussions was how parents divided children into one of two categories – the sexually innocent and the sexualised – and yet how contradictory this division could be. One mother spelt out her dilemma as 'You don't want to make them an adult and rob their innocence, but they have to be aware of things at the same time, you know'. Also evident was the view that access to information in the form of sex education erodes childhood 'innocence'. Linda, who moved to live in the UK with her sons for a period, described her feelings when she realised that her 11-year-old son was receiving a more robust sex education than he would have received in Ireland. She was particularly concerned about the prospect of a child's sexual innocence being lost.

The perception of children's 'knowingness', tastes and bodily agency as 'problematic' was a dominant feature of the data. Some parents identified the language to which children were exposed as part of a sexualised cultural discourse, but noted that while children might use such language, they do not always understand its meaning.

Some parents perceived 'sexualised' clothing as a conscious or agentic attempt by girls to render themselves attractive to boys. However, many other parents contested this view of children's identity by arguing that the clothes worn by young girls were not indicative of any intention to relay messages about sexual availability, but rather were worn because these were the clothes currently fashionable among their peers. Regardless of how it was projected onto children, the desire for such clothing was seen as a response to an external stimulus rather than to an active internal subjectivity, sexual, consumer or otherwise. Choosing clothes that both the parent (usually the mother) and the child (usually a female child) agreed on could be a flashpoint. As Denise put it, 'My daughter is 12 going on 13 … We've had battles … trying to steer her away from clothes that I wouldn't wear, so I certainly wouldn't let her wear … there's a bit of peer pressure to appear grown-up'. The earlier age at which girls are reaching puberty was noted by Naomi, who suggested that the physical development of girls' bodies at a younger age can belie the level of psychological development they have reached to cope with and manage their sexuality. However, despite these remarks, the question of children or young people expressing a sexual identity that was 'knowingly sexualised' remained ambivalent and context-specific. That the sexual signification of products or dress might be understood in different ways among adults and children, as noted in the literature (Pilcher, 2010; Rysst, 2010), was also considered by parents, including Naomi who commented:

> 'I think there's a bit of a disconnect actually between the clothes they [girls] are wearing and what we read from it … [We] kind of think that they are very mature and they know an awful lot and they're dressing accordingly, and that's not necessarily the case. I'm not sure that they see it at all the way we see it.'

While some parents did acknowledge that a girl going out dressed like a pop celebrity may desire to be considered fashionable rather than sexual, the pre-teen or teenage girl, who by her dress and conduct is deemed 'sexualised', tended to be the focus of discussions about sexualisation. In much of the data, she is 'the knowing child', spoiled or corrupted by society but also capable of corrupting or spoiling others. Just as the discourse of sexualisation is gendered in Irish public discourse (and indeed in that of other countries), so it was in the interview data generated. In this discourse, the 'sexualised' girl poses a danger to others, most notably her male and female peers. As Egan (2013) writes, by being located at the intersection of hyper-reception and hyperactivity, the sexualised girl is perceived to embody the worst of both. She upsets our concept of children as sexually innocent or asexual, and she challenges the heteronormative social order of things.

It is important to note that concerns identified by parents were not, for the most part, related to specific examples of sexual behaviour they had witnessed among their own or other children. Rather, parents' concerns were perceived as a general disconnect between the type of sexual modelling children might imitate and the maturity which the children possessed to safely and discerningly engage with such behaviour. Pauline, a parent of three daughters, observed how the sexualisation discourse generates something of a moral panic for parents. She explained that parents' fears were often about how they imagine other adults view children and she worried that this could almost stand in the way of a kind of parenting which is about helping and equipping children to navigate and overcome the risks they might encounter in their lives:

> 'And we may in our own minds be thinking, "What's your man next door going to think when he see her going out like that". But it's because our own fears are in there … you freak yourself out with fears, whereas you have to build up the trust and build up the strength in the child themselves to become that adult who can discern and think and whatever, and you know it's never going to be perfect … But you know the very word "sexualisation" can almost make us go 'uuuuhhhhh' … panic.'

While adopting a contested position, some mothers of daughters acknowledged the complicated contexts in which their daughters have to make decisions about how to dress when going out, and this acknowledgement prompted them to question themselves for thinking the worst. As explored later in this chapter, we found that sometimes parents were aware of, and prepared to move beyond, their visceral reactions to sexualised girls. For now,

the ambivalence of the question of being 'knowingly sexy' could, in certain ways, allow parents to refute a 'moral panic' position. For example, Teresa, in an exchange with Doreen (who had questioned how parents could permit daughters to go out at night dressed as they do), suggested that the girls 'don't realise the message they're giving'. In a number of instances, parents looked for more complicated cultural and political solutions, such as challenging sexism and misogyny in broader popular culture, or more critical educational provision to enable children to successfully navigate risk and to challenge restrictive or oppressive gender stereotypes or heterosexist attitudes to gender violence.

However, dominant idealisations of childhood as a space beyond (hetero)sexual identity and the market limited the extent to which these positions were adopted. Because many parents construct children as sexually innocent, rather than examining the differences between sexual identity, sexual exploitation and sexism, the notion of loss of childhood innocence attributed to sexualisation emerged as a significant concern in the interviews. This concern tended to 'other' childhood as a space entirely beyond the complexities of sexual and gender identity. Yet, underpinning discourses of childhood innocence are assumptions that girls have no right to express any kind of sexual self (Coy and Garner, 2012; Jackson and Vares, 2015). For example, Monica, a parent of two girls aged 14 and six years, suggested that in the mixed-school setting, childhood innocence is more likely to be preserved than in single-sex school settings because the girls 'aren't in awe of the boys and they're not trying to impress the boys. They're not trying to ... overtly parade themselves in front of the boys and there's a kind of ... an innocence'. This comment shows how girls' expression of sexual subjectivity becomes synonymous with their sexual objectification ('parading themselves in front of boys'). Furthermore, Coy and Garner (2012) note that it is because of discourses of childhood innocence that sexualisation is constructed as a child protection issue rather than a gender issue. Yet, the lived experience of gender and adult-child interests is that they intersect, as the analysis below suggests.

Gender in parents' experiences of sexualisation issues

As noted earlier, sexualisation was frequently perceived by parents as only pertaining to girls, or as a more prevalent phenomenon and a more pressing risk for girls than for boys. Indeed, some parents felt that they did not have much to say about sexualisation because they were the parents of boys, not girls. The neglect of boys and LGBT youth in sexualisation discourses has been highlighted in the literature (Attwood *et al*, 2012; Egan, 2013). Frances, one of the mothers interviewed, offered the following explanation as to why sexualisation makes parents think of girls more than boys: 'Because we're frightened ... you just see the danger then ... With boys ... it's completely different'. According to Edel, it is because 'We've to protect them [girls]'. Parents also explained that girls were the target of, and more susceptible to, sexualising influences in wider society. In this context, 'sexualised' or 'knowing' girls were frequently constructed as presenting a risk to boys, who in many parents' accounts were constructed as more innocent for longer, although this construction was further contradicted by parents' desires to regulate girls' dress to keep them safe. This paralleled the binary construction of children as being either sexually innocent or sexually knowing (Jackson and Vares, 2015) – a point made by Martina, whose children were girls, in the following comparison of girls and boys:

> 'Looking at primary Sixth Class, the girls are very highly sexualised through the media ... you see it in the way they'll pose in a photo – they're posing like Page 3 girls. The boys, it's just not on their radar yet it seems. They'd go to the youth club disco in their mother's cardigan, and the girls would be three hours getting ready. And part of that is their sort of fun thing, you know. But ... a big thing with them is the look and the image, and it's a sexual one.'

It is also evident in the following exchange between a couple who had young children:

> *Fiachra*: 'Like, my wife's nephew now has stories of what girls wear, what signals they give out, what they wear.'
> *Sorcha*: 'They're [girls] predatory now. The roles have changed.'

117

Sexualisation is thus perceived by some parents as threatening children's innocence. But when girls 'become sexualised' (rather than coming to be recognised as sexual subjects), their subjectivity is often only acknowledged by parents to the extent that they submit to their sexual objectification or 'prey' on young boys. The danger in relation to young boys was predominantly seen as a danger of hyper-sexualisation, in which exposure to 'sexualised' girls, sexual imagery or pornography would distort their understandings of what everyday sexual encounters entailed and would challenge their ability to control their sexual desires in real-life sexual encounters. The threat posed to boys by 'sexualised' girls is captured in the following comment from Nora, a mother of two teenage sons and a teenage daughter:

> 'I think, number one, the girls are going out there and they're presenting themselves like that and the poor boys haven't a hope. They can't see their control, they don't even know what their responses are because they can't control them. I have both … boys and a girl. I keep saying to my daughter, "Do not go out looking like you're looking for business – because you'll get it!" … Yeah, the boys are responsible to some extent, but I do think it's shoved in their faces. Absolutely, I think it's shoved in their faces.'

The idea of boys being 'responsible to some extent' partially absolves them from what they might do, on the grounds that 'it's shoved in their faces'. That so many parents assumed that girls, if their dress is perceived as inappropriate, are responsible for what they might experience in terms of sexual advances or sexual violence is an issue examined in further detail in Chapter 8. The following exchange between two parents in a focus group discussion indicates how the 'problem' is constructed as one of a daughter's inappropriate clothing that requires regulation, rather than as an opportunity to engage a son in talking about sexual consent:

> *Freda*: 'If you have your conversation with your daughter about the message she's giving out about, you know, dressing in certain ways, would you have the conversation about consent with your son, that it doesn't matter how she dresses?'
> *Margaret*: 'Yeah, we speak as a family that it's like she dresses as free as she wants to, but appropriate dress.'

Lucy was one of a small number of parents who considered that parents' concerns with their daughters' sexualised appearance was misplaced, favouring instead an approach to develop children's confidence towards reducing their susceptibility to being targeted for abuse. She was also emphatic that what needed constant reinforcement was the message that 'if a woman wants to go out dressed in a bikini and a transparent shirt, then she has every right to do so and nobody should believe that they have the right to touch or interfere with her in any way by the way she is dressed'. Lydia advocated a similar position, but also felt compelled to warn her daughter of the risks that go with a 'sexualised' appearance or conduct: 'I would say to her, "Be careful. I'm not saying you deserve anything that would happen to you, but you have to be careful".'

The data gathered in this research also highlight parental concerns about gender relations and inequalities for girls, who were perceived as being exploited or disempowered by the sexualised representations of women in contemporary commercial culture. As Hannah commented:

> 'I just wonder sometimes about these companies, you know, and I suppose that's the nature of the beast. We're in the job we're in, you know. You just see them exploiting young women …'

Jodie made a similar comment, viewing nightclubs and other entertainment venues as playing their part in the 'sexualisation' problem by promoting the sexualised style or look for girls that assures they will gain admittance. (This was also noted in a focus group with young adults, *see Chapter 7*.) How the nightclub setting operates for the most part as a heterosexual marketplace, according males greater privilege, was also an issue some parents discussed. A much less pervasive but nonetheless significant theme in the interviews was the perception that the commercial and cultural influences on girls may also be increasingly targeting boys.

Parents commented on their sons wearing 'low-slung trousers', designer-labelled clothes exclusively, seeking trendy hairstyles, buying expensive brands of sports equipment or attending to the development of their bodies. The latter activity, a few parents feared, could easily tip over from being about achieving better fitness and health into an unhealthy concern with body image.

Easier access to pornography, whether accidental, deliberate or more habitual, was most frequently the way the issue of sexualisation was discussed in relation to boys. Sadhbh, a mother of boys aged 14 and 19 years, was accepting of the fact that her sons were likely to access porn, but was concerned about how it might impact on their perception of women; she engaged them in discussion to provide a corrective message, one which stressed that porn did not represent the reality of sexual encounters. Stephen, who thought the sexualisation of culture was a predominantly gendered phenomenon, was also wary of how it might influence boys' perceptions of women in a negative way. Isabelle attributed girls' removal of all their body hair as a direct consequence of boys' expectations of girls, influenced by their access to porn. Echoing the earlier framing of males as 'naturally' sexual, parents also expressed concern about boys' ability to control their sexual urges or put a check on their expectations of girls in a more sexually saturated popular culture.

Globalised Ireland, segmented markets, social class and ethnicity

As noted earlier, concerns about commercial culture and sexuality were not solely focused on generational (adult-child) and gender relations. They were situated within a 'post-Celtic Tiger' Irish societal context and involved judgements along lines of gender, social class and ethnicity of those not seen as responsible or 'tasteful' consumer-citizens. The question of whether such people 'knowingly' adopt such 'excessive' modes of dress or behaviour was again debated, with reference to the segmentation of markets, the unavailability of 'respectable' clothing and the 'targeting' of those with less disposable income.

There were particular, contextual ways in which commercialisation and sexualisation in a globalised Ireland was constructed as 'excessive'. Antipathy to certain features of corporate consumer culture was evident in the interviews, but in different kinds of ways. While some parents raised no issues with lifestyle brands such as Abercrombie & Fitch or Hollister, others resented their popularity among children and young people, associating these brands with overpriced apparel, exploiting children's desire to appear 'cool', 'beautiful' and 'wealthy'. For parents of very young children, restrictive gender stereotyping in the marketing and design of goods targeting children was a significant concern and was often raised as a key part of the discussion on commercialisation and sexualisation. For example, one mother commented that 'even the toys from the time they're small, it's [commercialisation] so gendered the way that it's set up and they're really starting to create gender divides at that young age, which is a concern for me. I've a big problem with that'.

The packaging of food products that reinforced gender associations and stereotypes was also highlighted. Parents questioned why food products actively targeting children (e.g. sweetened yogurt products) had gender-specific images on their packaging, which parents found reinforced the view among children that the food products with the boy picture were only for boys and those with the girl picture were only for girls. Parents also criticised the exploitative practice of charging more for gender-specific colour versions of the exact same product. For example, one mother recalled that her daughter insisted on having the pink knee pads for roller blading and that these were more expensive than the black pads.

For other parents, it was not brands, but, rather, inappropriate slogans on view on young girls' T-shirts or trousers that represented the worst excesses of marketing to children. Clothing for young girls in the 10-13 years age group was a particular concern for parents, many of whom felt that girls' clothes available in the high street, particularly summer clothing, was

skimpy, mirrored styles suited to adult women, contained inappropriate slogans with sexual undertones and served to sexually objectify or portray the wearers as sexually knowledgeable. Many parents, particularly of girls, believed that clothing objectified children by imposing a sexual persona on children, who were not seeking it and were not aware of it. Two mothers expressed the following concerns:

> *Naomi*: 'I'm appalled when I see children going around wearing things that have writing across their backside, and writing across their bust area. They're too small to have made that decision themselves. It makes me really, really – it's one of my pet hates.'

> *Ruth*: 'I have two daughters – one will be fifteen tomorrow and the other one is twelve and a half – and especially the older girl, she would be really into fashion and stuff like that ... from an early age just inappropriate clothes for their age group and it's hard to find something that's trendy for them ... not making them look sexualised so young.'

The pervasiveness of sexualised clothing in high street outlets and the lack of consumer choice in relation to clothing for girls in the 10-13 years age group was a particular concern, often raised in focus groups and interviews. As Teresa mentioned, 'Summer stuff, like it's atrocious! ... You nearly have to go out of your way to not buy that type of clothes [for girls]. You have to deliberately make a conscious effort'. Teresa also commented that parents at times buy sexualised lines of clothing through lack of choice and time to spend shopping for alternatives. Similarly, Ruby commented that in seeking to dress young girls, it can be difficult to find what she considered to be 'respectable' clothing:

> 'I would hope to dress them all fairly reasonably. But I found this year – my little one is seven and she's just right for her age, height-wise and waist-wise ... but I found it very hard to get something suitable that was respectable.'

This was also borne out by the number of parents who reported that they opted to buy girls' clothing online, where more alternative and less gendered, sexualised or more 'respectable' styles were available. A few mothers reported buying clothing that might be considered 'sexualised' for their daughters, but made efforts to ensure their children wore the clothes in ways that reduced their sexual signification, such as combining crop shorts with leggings.

Certain shopping outlets were perceived by parents to stock cheaper clothing, which was more sexualised and more likely to be influenced by trends in celebrity or pop culture and bought by children, young people and parents who had less disposable income. The segmentation of the market – to target different categories of consumers with different levels of affordability – is evident in the following comment made by Hannah:

> 'And there is the big divide, I think, and there's no point in us hiding it here tonight, because you will see the children who don't have much money will be more into the sexualised clothes than the children who probably can shop in Brown Thomas ... You would never see that exploitation in the more expensive shops.'

As we will see in Chapter 7, some young adults echoed these comments, reporting that they purchased what they considered to be disposable clothing from the cheaper stores, in order to go out to nightclubs. However, for their everyday wear, they said they were more likely to buy from other retail outlets perceived to stock better quality, more durable and less 'sexualised' styles.

While some parents commented that 'sexualised' clothing was marketed to, and worn more by, girls in lower income families and by Traveller girls, others commented that 'sexualised' clothing also transcended social class and ethnic barriers, as evidenced by the 'uniformity' of the clothing worn by girls going to discos. As Section 6.3 on parents' interactions with their children suggests, however, and echoing the arguments of Seiter (1993) and Skeggs (1997), some parents used the discourse of 'respectability' to distinguish and reinforce their (female) children's backgrounds and behaviours as better than others.

While there was very limited awareness of the *Childrenswear Guidelines*, developed by Retail Ireland in 2011 and introduced to the marketplace in 2012, some parents commented that there did seem to be a reduction in the 'sexualised' clothing available to very young children in recent times, commenting particularly that padded bras for children were no longer on sale. However, the majority of parents stated that they would not be aware of any significant difference in girls' clothing available in shops. In this context, many parents were dissatisfied with the lack of choice in girls' wear in both the style and range of clothing available. Many mothers complained that it was practically impossible to buy trousers that were not 'skinny', which was a concern for parents whose daughters were a little taller or above the average size for their age.

6.2 Sites and modes of sexualisation

In their report on the sexualisation of children in Australia, Rush and La Nauze (2006a) were specifically concerned with sexualisation as it pertains to the physical appearance of children aged under 12 years. Dimensions of this included clothing, accessories, physical poses and cosmetics. Similarly, the *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls* (APA, 2007, pp. 4-18) also identified a wide range of cultural and commercial artefacts that contributed to and evidenced the sexualisation of girls, including media, television, music videos, music lyrics, movies, cartoons and animation, magazines, sports media, video/computer games, the Internet, advertising, products and cosmetics.

The data from parents in this study contained many references to what they perceived to be the cultural or societal objectification of children, and much parental concern related to what parents perceived to be the pressure experienced by their children to comply with sexualised 'norms' of dress and appearance. Beauty pageants for young girls were identified by a number of parents as the ultimate sexualising cultural phenomenon for young children in their fashioning of a kind of age-inappropriate hyper-femininity through the use of make-up, tanning products and dress. Stephen, however, thought that the American beauty pageant phenomenon was 'not a huge cry from the whole Irish dancing scene. They've gone a bit over the top with their whole dressing up and their curly hair and all the rest of it'. Making padded bras, bikinis and crop tops available in shops in the sizes of very young children was considered by the majority of parents interviewed to be entirely unacceptable.

Markets, media and the tyranny of 'the beautiful body'

While girls' relationship with sexualised media consumption is the subject of debate, as seen in Chapter 1, parents also subscribed to a discourse of influence and imitation (Renold and Ringrose, 2011) when talking about children's engagement with media. Many parents referred to the subliminal messages that children receive through a variety of media (including TV, music videos, song lyrics and advertising billboards) as shaping their views and perceptions, and inciting them towards behaviour that parents feel relatively powerless to control but consider age-inappropriate. One mother, Naomi, commented that her concern with movies and DVDs related less to physical sexual activity and more to messages being conveyed as to what might come to be associated with a 'normal' or normative sexual relationship.

Lucy also pointed out that the assumption that everyone knows, understands and can critically engage with advertising's intent does not apply in the same way to children, who do not yet have the same cognitive or critical skills as adults:

> 'It's okay to drape a woman over the front of the car because everybody knows we are being ironic. Well, that's not true – everybody doesn't know we are being ironic because they were only born 10 years ago and they haven't had that kind of whole history of advertising and the media.'

Children's perceptions of their body image, and in particular body size, were frequently identified by parents as being influenced by pervasive commercial and media imagery, which constructs 'beautiful bodies' as those that are thin, displayed seductively and moved provocatively. According to Ruby, 'You know, thinness especially. I get that all the time from a six-year-old … Thin is the right way. And it isn't slim or healthy. It's thin'. Isabelle feared that the media-based idealisation of the beautiful body as the passport to success seemed to register particularly with girls entering their teenage years:

> 'There's these ideals of what a woman is supposed to look like and how she's supposed to act, and that your only value is for your attractiveness – not your cleverness, not your ambition, not your sportiness, but your attractiveness is paramount – and that really seems to kick in around 12 or 13.'

Some parents drew attention to certain toys such as fashion dolls, which are marketed to children under the age of 10 years and which, they argued, have developed increasingly disproportionate bodies and a more sexual image over time (e.g. Bratz dolls' big heads, very defined eyes and skinny bodies).

Parents frequently expressed concerns about the negative emotional and psychological effects that stereotyped norms of beauty and attractiveness can create, for girls in particular, and spoke about the steps they take and the compromises they make to support their children's confidence about their own bodies. A quote from Naomi, mother of a 14-year-old girl, illustrates this dynamic:

> 'But one of the concerns for me is that a lot of the brands at the moment – and I'm aware of it because I'm not a stick insect either – are really geared towards a certain body type, and she [my daughter] is not that body type. So I'm more aware now when she goes shopping of saying, "OK, you can buy it. But bring it back and get it in in time that we can change it" … But I also don't want her going out in something that doesn't suit her shape. I try and explain that there's different body shapes and … I point to things that I think would really suit her. But they're not what everybody else is wearing … You're just trying to protect from the whole "thin thing" … and that's a huge problem, I think, among girls of that age.'

Naomi's account also raises the issue of how definitive prohibitions sit uneasily with more democratic parenting, which parents seek to practise otherwise. This theme is discussed in more detail below in Section 6.3.

Other risks identified by parents included that of children attracting or inciting unwanted sexual attention by wearing a fashion item connoting a sexual meaning unknown to the child. Naomi mentioned what are known as 'shag bands' in this context, but the Playboy merchandise was mentioned in the same vein:

> 'Those little wrist bands, which everyone would be familiar with – they started out as charity bands and they were all great and when my daughter was I'd say only eight or nine, she was wearing them because there was one for this charity and one for that charity. They seemed to be getting them for all the right reasons. But then I found out that for all the older kids there was an entirely different connotation about them. I think when something like that is really so explicit, as to what those sexualised meanings are that go with them [the wrist bands], it's very easy to say "Absolutely you are not wearing that. Take it off". It's not always easy, I think, to be so definite in saying "No" to things, unless there's something you don't even give a second thought to – "You're not wearing it. It's not open to debate". But other things it's not as easy to be so definite in saying no … You're trying to give them their independence and everything else, you know.'

Sexualisation, technology and social media

Many parents identified children's access to technology as a major area of concern. Julia, the mother of a nine-year-old boy and an eight-year-old girl noted, 'It terrifies me, the technology … possibly because I don't know enough about it'. Some parents mentioned that their children could successfully circumvent controls that parents had put on devices such as iPhones and iPads because of their better technological abilities.

Many parents raised concerns about the material that could be accessed by children as a risk in terms of both potential exposure of younger children to paedophile attention and access of older children, particularly boys, to pornographic or sexualised images which they feared could potentially distort their perceptions of what constituted normative sexual activities or relationships. A major concern identified by parents related to what they perceived as the impossibility of completely controlling children's access to technology. As the mother of a 15-year-old girl commented:

> '… the control thing, the mobile phones, because they can be in their room with it, you've no control over what's going on and you can't control what comes in to them. You can't control what they can access, particularly with the smart phones, so it's a real, I mean it's a control issue. You just want to protect them from the fact that they have access to everything.'

Other parents made reference to the fact that some of the traditional mechanisms they had for monitoring aspects of their children's behaviour were not effective for managing technology use. The following exchange was typical:

> *Ruby*: 'It's very hard to … I tried to police it by getting other people to investigate on my behalf … Ah, you know, the way you could always say to parents before, "Well, when they're out together if you hear of anything, let me know". Well now it's not that way anymore.'
>
> *Edel*: 'It's more mobile.'
>
> *Frances*: 'There's no escaping it … and as much as you try to police it, you can't … because it's everywhere.'

Numerous parents identified their own limited skills in using and understanding technology as exacerbating their fears in relation to their ability to monitor their children's use of technology. As the mother of two sons aged 12 and 10 noted, 'They're well able. They're much more tech-savvy than we are'. This issue is further explored below as part of the discussion on the roles of parents, who are the ones expected to take responsibility for addressing these issues.

6.3 Interacting with children: parents' negotiations and practices

The ways parents negotiated child-rearing, commercialisation and sexualisation was not reducible to a list of skills, techniques or tips that could be implemented in a decontextualised manner. As the above discussion suggests, some parents were well informed, or felt well informed, but at the same time could not always practise what they believed in a stable or consistent way. Parents' experiences of, and capacity to deal with, these complex issues varied because they were situated in real, context-specific struggles. These struggles included finding the time and place to discuss matters; the economic, social and educational resources at their disposal; the specific history of their relationship with a given child; how they recalled memories of their own childhoods; and, of course, the relative influence of their children's peers, siblings, extended family, neighbourhood and engagement with media images and discourses. These factors shaped both how parents framed commercialisation and sexualisation as 'issues' and how they negotiated them in relation to their children. Their complexity explains parents' contingent, rather than formulaic or always prescriptive, approaches in a detraditionalised

world. Such contingent approaches were reflected in the advice-borrowing and trial-and-error strategies that parents often adopted in relation to a range of sites: their own household, supermarkets, friends' houses, schools, restaurants and so on.

Four key domains of practice – through which commercialisation and sexualisation as issues are defined and negotiated with children – were identified. These key practices, each discussed below, are:

> › potential supports for parents;
> › distinguishing between a child's wants and needs as consumers;
> › constructing the child's identity and pleasures (control, status and values);
> › regulating the information available to, and circulated by, children in a digital world.

Potential supports for parents

Parents' interactions with 'other adults', whether positive or negative, proved to be an important facet of relationships with children, and of child-rearing. These 'other adults' usually included their partner and/or co-parent, and the parents of children in their child's social sphere. In some crisis situations, however, parents drew on schools, youth services, social services or the Garda Síochána to better inform them or to help assist them in negotiating certain issues with their children.

As the discussion in Section 6.2 suggested, the different, if not markedly unequal, ways in which boys and girls experience norms about their sexuality and bodies as they grow was evident in the interviews with parents. For example, constructing a 'future' need to talk about sex and sexuality with his children, Fiachra felt that a shared approach with his partner Sorcha would be vital, but in the context of a climate where girls' sexual behaviour was perceived as more 'risky' or problematic than that of boys:

> 'I think it would take the two parents, more than say one … It will be as bad in 20 years' time as it is now … If a 15-year-old girl gets pregnant, it's a disaster for her. If a 15-year-old boy becomes a father, it isn't as big a deal.'

In relation to commercialisation, parents reported an occasional need to educate their child about marketing. This often included helping children through incidental, 'teachable' moments while watching TV, out shopping or while discussing a current public issue. Parents drew distinctions between the fantasy of consumer desire and the reality of what was valued by the children themselves, what was affordable and what made good sense from an economic, moral or self-esteem standpoint. As Sorcha (mother of three children aged 1-6 years) stated, 'I do already try to explain to them about marketing and about how products are marketed and why they're being marketed, and how they want to sell things to people and they want to make a profit'. Similarly, Ross recalled revisiting a previous conversation about marketing with his daughter: 'Well, yeah, I know that looks great in the ad, but remember this thing that looked great in the ad that we got and how crap it was!' Referring to the consumption of low-cost clothing, Martina commented that she was 'always trying to bring the rest of the world into the situation' and used a fire in a Bangladeshi clothes factory as a starting point for discussion with her children. Dermot stated that he and his partner Angela would not be initiating discussions 'all the time, but whenever we can' and with reference to their oldest son (aged 14), sexist or other 'derogatory terms come up from time to time … we have to pull him up on that alright'.

Coupled parents reported that they did not necessarily agree or consult each other over everyday parenting, due to the division of labour or because they lived in different households. Discussions about child-rearing work, for example, demonstrated that mothers were much more likely to be responsible, and to hold themselves responsible, for what they perceived to be both good and bad decisions made concerning their children. Rebecca recalled buying technological products for her children because their friends had them, although her husband

was against the purchases. There were discussions during interviews when couples passed judgement on each other's parenting or consumption practices. Dermot and Angela, for example, had this exchange when explaining their children's interest in branded commodities:

> *Dermot:* 'You [Angela] are a bit of a brand creature yourself, so you could look at you!'
> *Angela*: 'So are you!'
> *Dermot*: 'You could look at me as well so!' [laughs]

There was a range of discussions and debates over everyday 'responsible' parenting, circumscribed by the division of child-rearing labour between parents. Ross noted that his partner did most of the clothes shopping with their nine-year-old daughter and that they would on occasion have 'little couple squabbles' about the purchases. While one parent might have a strict 'no television as a babysitting tool' policy, as in the case of parents Therese and Emily, the latter reported not having 'the luxury' of being at home everyday to police this rule and when their children were being minded by others.

The pursuit of sustained and consistent parenting practices could be complicated by a strained or distanced relationship between parents. Suzanne, mother of five children aged 9-17 years, observed that 'with myself and the ex, we completely go against one another on what I would allow my kids to view and what he would allow them to view'. Karen was also critical of her former partner for his alleged tendency to reward their 13-year-old daughter for spending time with him by buying her what she wanted. However, parental separation did not imply an inherently problematic process of parenting or adult-child relations, not least because relative disagreement was also part of the experience of coupled parents. Some parents also united in their opposition to an item of consumption requested by a child when they both (or at least one partner) felt determined enough or when they had already established an agreed position on an issue. For example, Ross stated that '[we] certainly try when we're having those kinds of discussions about anything … that it's a united front rather than one or other … we try to get our ducks in a row before one or other of us talks to her [daughter]'.

Parents taking steps to limit the amount of money gifts given to children at birthday parties was considered helpful. Emily commented that on a tight budget, she would encourage her children to play with their friends from school, which was 'more focused on play than the things they play with'. Therese felt it was 'great to get guidance and advice from … other parents', while Ross commented that 'cub scouts' was another source of support and discussion over what was appropriate for their children.

There was, however, an element of social class and cultural distinction, and designation of 'respectable' and 'distasteful' households, suggested in some of these inter-family exchanges, and a minority of parents challenged and criticised the practices adopted by other parents. What was perceived as irresponsible parental indulgence of consumption among young people was criticised by a number of parents. One woman criticised what she described as 'passive parenting', characterised by some parents' failure to refuse children's requests for consumer goods. Another woman claimed that she was 'gobsmacked at the values of the younger [parents]', whom she claimed 'won't say "No". They say "Ah well, everyone else is doing it" '. A more intensive parenting culture was alluded to by Leona, who contrasted the approach adopted by many Irish parents with that adopted by parents from 'African' families with whom she was familiar:

> 'I do think that in Ireland we're way too child-centric, I mean in a way that I find negative, in that I spent most of my money and my effort goes into my son … I'm generalising a bit, but I've worked for years with parents from other countries … they wouldn't feel as much pressure to please, please, please the child …'

Martina criticised what she considered to be the 'excessive materialism' witnessed by her in some of her friends' houses, hoping that her children would put less emphasis on material goods in their own lives. Extended family members provided another potential source of support in relation to affirming and enforcing, but were also acknowledged as sometimes

contesting or undermining parenting practices (e.g. extended family members or friends who give gifts sometimes requested by children but disapproved of by parents, such as particular brands of dolls or toy guns).

Staying with the issue of supports from adults outside the home, some parents either sought out or had come into contact with the gardaí, teachers and social workers through incidents and crisis situations. Marie, for example, stated that her daughter had been raped close to their home and her son had been sexually assaulted by another child at his former primary school. She felt very let down by all three agencies (gardaí, teachers and social workers) in terms of how they responded to her children's needs. Suzanne, however, reported a positive experience about her daughter's youth club, to which her daughter's home-school liaison teacher had referred her; she also found her daughter's school very supportive and understanding in relation to issues about make-up and appearance.

Distinguishing between a child's wants and needs as a consumer

Parents discussed at length their contingency plans to differentiate between what a child wanted and what was needed for their well-being. What arose as a consumer desire on the part of the child was always context-specific in relation to how the child made sense of the issue, their situated location relative to peers, when the child was born, and his or her place in the family. For example, in relation to place and school geographies, Emily noted that her older daughter Shauna 'went to school in the town, a much bigger school, busier environment' and 'would have probably more contact with her friends outside of school than the younger siblings'. A particular brand of video game was very popular when Shauna attended this school and Emily resisted Shauna's claim that '*everybody* has one … and we don't'. As a compromise, some parents reported buying second-hand technological items or passing on their old phones to children to meet their requests in a cost-neutral or less expensive way. A recurring suggestion was that it is easier to avoid brand awareness or influence if families are living in rural rather than urban areas, or if their children attend small country schools.

The parenting strategies needed and developed could be quite different depending on when the child was born and his or her place in the family, given the rapid changes in the technology available to consumers on a mass scale, even in the past decade. Siblings could therefore have very different experiences (an issue also supported by the data presented in Chapter 7 on young adults' views). For example, Marie noted that when her sons were babies, text messaging did not exist, whereas her daughter was born in 2004 when texting was 'a normal part of the world'. While Marie asserted that she would not rear her younger child any differently and that this child was not more demanding, these wider differences needed to be taken into account when understanding the challenges confronting families. Suzanne commented good-humouredly that her younger daughter would not get 'an inch of leeway' due to the quite negative experiences of her older sister in relation to peer pressure on social networking sites. Orla felt the fact that their family was 'very broke' when their daughter was young had made her 'very money conscious'. Her partner Stephen commented that their daughter would worry about how expensive things were, even if they had agreed to buy something for her. Indeed, the issue of unavailable disposable income in the household was mentioned by a number of parents as a factor which children were aware of and which circumscribed their consumer expectations accordingly – a factor also highlighted in the literature review in Chapter 2 by Chin (2001) and Ridge (2007). Margaret and her husband had been unemployed for a number of years and referring to their three children, aged 9-14 years, they stated: 'They know that money's not there so they know that it's not fair to put the pressure on us.'

The context-specific nature of the child/young person's consumer desires explains parents' very common adoption of trial-and-error tactics to changing circumstances. Parents frequently commented on the rapidly changing nature of the marketing targeted at their children and explained the strategies they had to draw on to deal with this targeting and the 'temporary

joy' that is promised by advertised, high-status products. Pauline commented that her 12-year-old daughter was into 'a certain deck of cards' popular among her peer group; however, she noted that her older daughters would remind their younger sister about 'value for money'. A number of parents spoke about encouraging what could be described as 'smart' consumer choices, rather than necessarily discouraging consumption or commercial activity itself, which was inescapable. Emily, for example, discovered at the checkout that her daughter Shauna had put an energy drink in the shopping trolley 'because it's really good for you … it's for all the athletes'. Emily questioned Shauna by asking her 'Did you read the label … read the ingredients?'. However, what is often called 'kiddy consumption' was 'escapable' in one sense for those parents who reported that they deliberately visited the supermarket *without* their children.

Judith asserted that you had to 'pick your battles' as a parent, given the different wants and needs of differing children. Some parents reported a sense of 'giving in' at times. For example, Rebecca stated 'we gave in – we bought the portable PlayStation in the end'. Emily noted that if her younger children were tired, then she was:

> '… not going to start a huge battle in the shop. But I generally would stick to my guns or make it clear that they're getting it now but they're not having it until we go home, they have their dinner, they do such a thing. So it's used as a kind of reward … I just feel in those situations it's not always the best thing to say "Absolutely no" and putting my foot down.'

Rebecca felt that parents could exert a progressively positive influence on the choices their children made as they got older by reinforcing the idea of informed consumer decision-making. She gave the example of her son comparing prices and independently bringing home a cheaper item. The 'gradual responsibilisation' of the child growing up in a consumer society is discussed later in this chapter with reference to the issue of control over the child's identity and 'protection' of their social status.

It is worth noting some of the reported limitations of a 'reasoning' strategy based on the idea that children lack reason and adults are in control of reason. Pauline noted that both her own and her older daughters' appeal to reason and to the cost/benefit of a certain product was not as straightforward or effective as it seemed, and Kay commented in relation to attachment to specific brands at particular times, 'the marketing goes so deep'.

As consumers, the important feeling of membership or status that goes with a product, experience or activity means that appealing to reason within the household alone could not contend with the much more subtle construction of status that operates through contemporary marketing and consumption sites (TV, social networking, child-focused sites). According to parents' reports, this feeling was not necessarily all-consuming or relevant to all children or young people, but it was certainly present. The effectiveness of repeated advertising and exposure to a product was implicit in Sorcha's description of the behaviours of her sons (aged four and six): they would come with their requests to her as soon as a new video game was advertised and, just like young adults (*see Chapter 7*), parents noted the ways in which their children are members of a heterogeneous group that individually and collectively move in and out of consumer desires. While there can be marketing fads or crazes, these are not entirely predictable on the basis of their age or gender, indicating that children's engagements with marketed products are active, diverse, plural and in flux.

A number of parents said that they had, on occasion, bought their child something that they 'shouldn't have to buy', but felt under pressure to do so. This was sometimes a case of being seen to be able to afford something and at other times it was so that the child would not feel excluded by their peers – or as Sorcha put it 'mocked or teased'. For example, high-status sporting occasions pressured some parents into pre-emptively managing the risk of their child feeling excluded or different because of their dress. Sorcha's partner Fiachra noted that he had to buy the official Ireland soccer jersey rather than a copy of it so that his son would feel part

of the international game they were attending. Another mother very reluctantly yielded to her teenage daughter's requests to buy her a body contour dress prior to going to Irish college, only to find that her daughter never wore it because the other college students did not have these dresses. For Marie, the issue of dignity was paramount: given that she had to face and explain her family's homelessness as the head of the household, she commented that when she cannot afford something, 'I do sometimes feel lousy about it'. Ross was keenly aware of how his nine-year-old daughter, when talking about school, divided her classmates into three groups – 'the cool kids, the normal kids [which included herself] and the boring kids' – and he thought this kind of practice of stratification may also be influenced by US sitcoms viewed by children in Ireland (e-mail to Research Team, 30 June 2013).

Parents at times utilised their own memories of childhood as an internal guide to what their children needed. Aoife commented that because she was reared to respect money, she 'didn't buy into all the Celtic Tiger'. Referring back to the issue of managing a child's wants and needs, Emily felt that if children 'don't have the life skills to deal with' not getting what they want and having their expectations disappointed, then those skills and expectations are what must be addressed. However, the skills and ways of coping that Emily developed came from the circumstances of her own childhood, which led her to temper her expectations. Being someone who was teased at school and who came from 'poorer circumstances', she commented that as a parent she 'always felt … this is our lot' and 'that is what we have tried to pass on to them [children]'. Christine and Toby commented that their children saw 'very little television' because it was not a big part of their parents' lives or their own lives when they were children. However, thoughts of one's own childhood could equally prompt parents to take an alternative approach. Sorcha commented that her household was 'fairly strict' growing up and that her parents 'wouldn't have talked to us about anything really'. She felt that she wanted to be able to 'talk to my children about everything'.

Control over the child's identity and pleasures: Family identity, status and values

The following discussion examines parents' attempts to create coherent adult and child boundaries, and stable 'values for' their children, given the range of sites, symbols and persons to which their children are exposed. It particularly highlights how parents' beliefs were widely oriented towards the notion that the younger the child is, the easier it is 'to control' them or make unilateral decisions on their behalf. The term 'control' here does not imply a repressive, authoritarian or cynical approach on the part of parents to their children. But neither does it refer to a natural infallibility or unilateral right on the part of parents to decide what is permissibly pleasurable for their child. Rather, issues of 'control' are examined to observe the often contradictory and sometimes counterproductive roles afforded to adults as 'experienced protectors' and children as naturally 'innocent' and 'in need of adult protection' in wider society.

Some parents perceived themselves as being effectively 'in control' of their child's consumption activities, particularly their bodies and sexuality. Some parents thought that they could exercise greater control in offsetting the most harmful effects of commercialisation, but they were much less confident about their impact on mediating influences of sexualisation in their children's lives. As Ruth, mother of three children aged 9-15 years, put it:

> 'My sense of it is personally that the commercialisation I can manage more. I can say "No" and I can be mean and not buy something. But the sexualisation is more absorbed, maybe subconsciously or without my awareness, and there are messages here that I can't necessary control.'

In comparison to adults, children tended to be seen as 'lacking control' with regard to the pursuit of pleasure and this was conceived as a natural, inherent and stable feature of (younger) childhood. For example, Sally and Sorcha described their younger children's

relatively generic, easily satisfied attachment to a brand as a marker of their child's innocence and unknowingness, whereas Suzanne referred to her 16-year-old son's current detachment from high-status sports brands as a sign of 'growing out of' an attachment to branding in general. Whether parents openly acknowledged it or not, their accounts suggested that their children acted to make meaning of consumption and sexuality within and outside the household, and that parents themselves did not exert an entirely stable or consistent position in relation to child-rearing in a commercial or more sexually saturated cultural world.

Within families, some parents noted very different attitudes among their children towards fashion or the degree of influence exerted by peers. Ruth stated in relation to her two daughters: 'She likes clothes, but she's not bothered by trends or fashion ... whereas the other girl would like her fashion more'. Another parent reported, 'Our second daughter ... just does her own thing and she's happy enough about it. But my other two would be more influenced by peer pressure'. Similarly, a number of parents commented on their children's vastly different consumption habits despite growing up in the same household and experiencing the same parental upbringing and values. One child in a family might be a very prudent and cautious spender, good at saving and 'making do', while another could be, according to parents, very spendthrift and more careless with money.

Parents noted that children, even those very young, could also be very discerning in their tastes and choices. For example, parents of younger children observed their individual children's clear preferences for one set of character-based products rather than another (e.g. Bob the Builder®, Fireman Sam® and Thomas and Friends®). Parents were also attuned to how particular brands were worn as markers of young people's social class positioning and their desire to differentiate themselves from those they saw as 'other'. Isabelle referred to 'a hierarchy of labels', noting that her daughter once commented that her brother 'should be wearing a grey Canterbury' (rather than a different brand of tracksuit) on the basis that this was more in keeping with his social class position.

Some parents explained their child's desires without reference to the fact that they faced similar 'irrationalities' and short-term impulses as adults, and their own parenting positions were not stable or always consistent. Triona was one of a few parents who did not draw a big distinction between adults' and children's susceptibilities to advertising and to consumption. Sometimes parents reported sharing the same interests/hobbies as their children, and as a result, the same desires for certain forms of consumption. The situated meaning-making activity on the part of children, which contests their status as 'unknowing' in comparison with 'knowing' adults, has also been discussed in the literature (Buckingham, 2011).

Dynamics of 'control': Rule-setting, responsibilisation, protection, prevention

Themes already discussed in the data that reflected the assumed differences between adults and children included non-negotiable rules around watching television, reported by a number of parents. Another theme included the frequent but often contradictory problematisation of children as 'innocent' or 'unknowing' in relation to consumer activities. For example, Pauline stated that 'at primary school age', children cannot see the very temporary gain that emerges from satisfying a consumer desire. Sorcha stated that the older the children became, the more commercialisation and sexualisation would become 'a concern' because presently she could 'prevent them from seeing things, prevent them from listening to things', and, as yet, they did not go to friends' houses unsupervised. However, such parents' views were contradicted by others, who viewed consumer society as inescapable at any age. Sorcha recognised that her children were 'always going on about McDonald's', noting that 'they do pick up on advertisements and it has an effect on them'.

129

In fact, many parents 'gave credit to' their children (to use Dermot's term) for their discerning approach to consumer and economic matters. Saving money, for example, was a common value across interviews, one that could remain relatively stable regardless of children's age, even if it was not always consistently implemented or if parents acknowledged their own efforts to save money as hopeless. There were multiple reports of saving money as an enjoyable and rewarding activity that could involve children more consciously in the commercial world. For example, Sally noted that her one-and-a-half-year-old son enjoyed putting money in a big bottle at home ('It's the holiday fund'), while her older son has 'a piggy bank … We probably should encourage it more … as in counting up and stuff'. She remarked that her children 'definitely know that we save money'. Andrea noted that there was an element of fun and competition between her children to see who had saved the most money, while Monica commented that the ethic of saving was bound up with important life events as well as being an everyday practice.

Parental practices relating to pocket money were varied. Some parents systematically provided set amounts of pocket money each week for children to manage with or without parental interference and they perceived it to be useful in terms of children learning how to manage money. Other parents provided children with ad hoc payments for particular chores carried out occasionally, often at the request of children who were seeking money for particular purchases. Yet more parents provided no pocket money, but negotiated on an ongoing basis with children in relation to requests for money for specific items. Parents giving between €5 and €10 mostly for pocket money on a weekly basis tended to be the norm in households where it was common practice. One mother stated: 'I do give pocket money and I try and steer him towards particular things, but it's generally sweets and comics at his age anyway'. Another commented: 'My daughter … hasn't looked for pocket money, so I haven't provided it. But it's based on jobs. So if she wants to buy something, then she'll say "Can I do some jobs?" '

Changing family circumstances, such as decline in finances during the recession or a child moving into secondary school, frequently prompted changes in pocket money practices. Financial challenges for families, whether constant or temporary, obliged parents to inform children of the situation and to discuss the implications for children's consumption. Linda initiated the practice of giving pocket money to her two children, prompted by being interviewed for the study: she reported that her children looked for so little (€10 for the 13-year-old and €2 for the 10-year-old) that she thought they had very little realisation of what they had actually been costing her each week (e-mail to Research Team, 9 August 2013).

This gradual assuming of responsibility by children as consumers and social actors was a common theme throughout the interviews. It tended to define commercial activity and meaning-making as something that children could 'eventually' or 'gradually' come to be part of and understand. Orla and Stephen, for example, noted that when the claim came from their child that 'everyone' has a particular item or does a particular activity, they would situate their child back in their own peer group and ask 'Who's everyone?' A reading of children as social-actors-in-waiting was far more pronounced with respect to the child's body and issues of sex and sexuality.

Strategies of 'prevention' and 'protection' were a genuine response to commercialised and sexualised social relations that, while potentially pleasurable, were also considered to expose children and young people to both real and perceived dangers. For example, Karen discovered through having her 13-year-old daughter's Facebook password that a serious sexual assault had taken place among boys within her daughter's peer group and the related images had been uploaded to a pornography website. However, at times the use of these 'prevention' and 'protection' strategies could not hide the contradictions in adults' status 'over' children, leading to difficulties in, and anxious anticipation about, the 'teenage years'. By focusing on the perceived negatives of acknowledging child sexuality, the democratic case for disrupting or reworking decision-making processes over children's lives within and outside the family could be downplayed.

One of the strategies used by certain parents in relation to regulating children's bodies and sexualities was to speak of their family's values and/or social standing. Here, to speak 'as a family' was to reinforce a respectable 'family identity' and to embed the notion that the children were representing not just themselves but their wider family. Dermot noted that he and his partner Angela would not allow their early teenage sons to go to a 'function … in trainers and tracksuit bottoms'. They would reinforce the point that they were 'representing the family'. However, Angela also noted that 'there could be a lot of arguments' in relation to this. Rather than draw attention to the issue of 'modesty' with her younger children, Orla said she would speak in terms of clothes that are 'practical' for them as an 'outdoorsy family' – 'We go out walking. Why would you need … a skirt that small? … Even with the weather and everything, I'd be talking practical'. However, she noted that objections might arise 'when they're teenagers'. These latter comments from Orla and Angela respectively reflect a wider issue: that of the changing relationship between parents and children as the latter grow older.

'Control' and family social status

The maintenance of status differences between children and adults as social actors also bore relation to the maintenance of other differences in social status, such as social class, gender and ethnicity. Karen saw her reiteration of their 'respectable' family identity as a protective factor in relation to her daughter, and Suzanne put her daughter on a contraceptive injection at 15 years of age because she was 'not taking any chances … I don't know whether I don't trust her or whether it's society I don't trust … If she got pregnant and had a baby, I'd have a heart attack'. A minority of parents drew attention to what they perceived to be irresponsible parenting practices in relation to the sanctioning of or failure to censure sexually inappropriate clothing and behaviours. Parental practices in this regard were used as a mechanism through which some parents defined their own identities and values as parents relative to those of others considered less responsible. Poor parental judgement in relation to what constituted appropriate activities or clothes for young girls was identified by some parents, who felt that such practices were contributing to the general normalisation of a sexualised culture of childhood. Ella, who had two sons aged 13 and five years, remarked:

> 'Sometimes it's the parents [who are] to blame as well … I see these little girls, three-year olds or whatever, and they're doing their dancing in front of the family or friends, and they're doing a Beyoncé … and everyone is cheering them and they think it's great … It's nearly pornography what they're doing, some of them.'

Other parents adopted a more open, democratic approach to matters of the body, sex and sexuality with reference to their own family and social contexts. Emily, for example, stated that if they 'were going out for an occasion', then she would encourage her 14-year-old daughter to 'dress appropriately'; however, she also said that she would 'never expect her to conform fully' to her wishes – 'I realise that she needs to find her own [way]'. She gave the example of a 'lesson learned' by her daughter when she went to a disco wearing high-heeled shoes: given the discomfort that ensued, she wished her mother had forced her to 'wear the converse' (i.e. flat shoes). In what might seem paradoxical, some parents like Andrea, a school teacher, felt that the school uniform only heightened the likelihood of branded clothing becoming an issue for young people. Indeed, some parents reflected that 'no uniform day' in schools escalated the pressure on students to dress 'cool' or in brands popular among their peers.

In most instances, negotiations between parents and daughters relating to daughters' 'sexualised dress' were complex and strategic on both parts. Mothers tended to be at the coalface of these negotiations with their daughters, sometimes acting as a buffer or peacemaker between daughter and father, and in some cases even covering for their daughter or advising her how to successfully negotiate with him.

Negotiating (girls') sexual citizenship in the everyday

Though most of the mothers interviewed were disapproving of the 'sexualised' clothing that teenage girls or their own daughters wore (e.g. hot pants, short dresses/skirts, high heels and bra/crop tops), only a small number took a very authoritative stance or entered into direct confrontation with their daughters. One of these mothers, Saoirse, commented '… the uniform for children to wear, young teenagers, is hot pants and a belly-top, and there was no way she [daughter] was going out of the house dressed like that'. A minority of mothers demanded that daughters change their clothes before going out of the house, but a significant number of women interviewed felt the need to tell their daughters that they were looking nice, in spite of their concerns, because they were equally concerned about not making them feel too self-conscious or overly aware of their bodies. They also feared that excessive negativity might cause their daughters to shut them out as confidantes and they were very mindful of keeping lines of communication open. Sometimes mothers solicited the help of an older brother or sister in the discussion, feeling that this was likely to be a more effective strategy, since the older sibling's opinion was likely to be more influential than their own. Other mothers, reluctant to challenge their daughters for fear of injuring their self-esteem, suggested alternative outfits in their daughters' wardrobes, which were similar in kind but less revealing. The common practice for some girls to get ready together in one girl's house meant that some parents did not know what their daughters actually wore going out generally or to discos. Significant concern was voiced about discos for teenagers, especially those held in commercial nightclubs. Parents feared that this was 'grooming' their children for what a good night out should be when they are older, and many also voiced concerns about scantily-clad young girls coming out of discos at 10.30pm, the same time when adults or specifically 'older, drunk men are queuing up to go into the adult nightclub'.

More egalitarian or democratic parenting approaches within the household were often circumscribed and contained by the wider societal problematisation of child sexuality and things 'they should not know'. For example, Therese agreed that sexualisation was not a major issue for her young children, but that her son was asking a lot more questions recently: she remembered how 'we were playing Scrabble recently and the first word [giggles] he puts down was SEX … his second word was he added Y to it! … He's enjoying the taboo-ness of it'. Reflecting perhaps the need to protect him and her concern about the implications of his 'knowing', she reported reminding him, 'I wouldn't want you chatting about this in the school yard … it's not a bad word, but I still wouldn't want you using it'.

The wider societal perception that children develop along a natural trajectory from asexuality to adult sexuality created fears among parents about how they 'introduce' them to sexuality and the implications. For example, Judith stated:

> 'You don't want to be introducing notions … so yeah you have to … start having these conversations rather early. I mean you don't want to be really talking to your 13 or 14-year-old about gonzo porn! [laughs] But, without calling it that, you have to introduce the idea that there is material out there that's … you know what I mean. So, yeah, it is uncomfortable.'

Parents worried that by broaching certain issues with their young children, they were potentially 'sexualising' them or introducing them to the less savoury aspects of the 'adult' world, potentially eroding their innocence. For example, one mother worried about explaining why she did not wish her daughter to attend a concert:

> 'There's a concert that she's asking to go to … I can't remember the singer's name … I didn't know her, but then I was looking at stuff about her and it's just not appropriate for her age. So I said "It's not appropriate", but I haven't said why, and I'm wondering if this is the right age to start talking about sexualisation to a child who, in my view, is quite innocent about it. It's just when is the right time to say the real reason?'

Another mother, of a 17-year-old daughter and a 14-year-old son, recalled the dilemmas created for her some years ago by the Playboy Bunny merchandise marketed to children:

'They just saw it as a little bunny rabbit, so I suppose as a parent that's where the conflict lies, and am I opening them to a world full of unpleasantness or am I … and then I kind of think that children only understand what they're old enough and what their experience will allow them to understand, and other things go over their head, and I would always try and phrase things in an age-appropriate way.'

A recurring dilemma for parents was the perceived need to make children aware of 'stranger danger' and external sexualising influences, but without actually wanting to engage in the kind of frank discussion that might be necessary. This is evident in the following comment from Maeve:

'You want to stop them from doing the thing that is potentially dangerous without explaining to them why, because you don't want to bother them with that awful stuff. You want to leave them alone, to just be who they are. But you really have to [explain].'

Angela felt more comfortable talking about issues as they arose. She attributed this to her profession as a nurse. In relation to instigating a discussion about the 'Slane girl' incident with her older children (*see Appendix 9*), she stated, 'I wouldn't go too much into anything that went on … But, yeah, I wouldn't have any problem [explaining]'. Rebecca mentioned taking a similar approach. While most parents referred to wanting their child to become independent (parents like Andrea and Ross used terms like 'empowerment', while Karen referred to sex and sexuality as 'two beautiful things'), there was little explicit or sustained recognition of child participation in wider society and the potential contribution children themselves could make to decision-making processes about consumption and sexuality.

Regulating the information available to and circulated by children in a digital world

Many parents identified measures they employed to regulate their children's use of technology and social media. Practices to protect children from material their parents consider unsuitable included not having TVs in their bedrooms, locking channels, having passwords on the family laptop and keeping the laptop/computer in public family areas. Ross and Suzanne both commented that the possibility of recording digital television meant that they could skip over real-time advertising, and many parents reported a preference for buying DVDs for younger children to reduce their exposure to TV advertising. Some parents established ground rules in relation to the use of technology and social media, which involved the parent having access to the child's password and conducting regular checks on the material they access and view. The following description of the controls used by one family was fairly typical:

'We have software on the computer and we try and restrict their iPods as much as we possibly can. You can restrict down to an age rating. But they also know that I have access to everything, that I will check …'

In regulating the information available to and circulated by children, parents considered the cost/benefit of investing in communications hardware (e.g. phone, tablet) and software (e.g. subscriptions or permissions to enter a particular online forum targeted at children). The data indicated that the normative age by which children were permitted to have a phone was 11 or 12 years, or at the time immediately prior to making the transition to post-primary education. As such, communications technologies could act as protective and relationship-maintaining tools for families who had multiple roles and commitments. As the previous section on constructing and controlling the child's identity might imply (*see above*), the approaches taken by parents to monitor children's technology and social media usage varied with the age of the children. Most parents of younger children reported that they directly supervised children's Internet activity or they had installed monitoring software and password controls on the devices used by their children.

In certain situations, there was pressure to purchase the premium brand of a product. Some parents noted that their children preferred not to have a product at all if they could not have the premium product. Emily commented that her older daughter felt a lot of pressure 'to have the latest thing … so I think she chooses not to have anything at all'. Children having phones (and particularly phones with the most advanced features) appeared to symbolise a watershed moment for some parents, representing a shift in the perceived control they had over consumption, sexuality and their child.

Parents of younger children under the age of 12 years reported relatively similar practices in relation to the regulation of social media and technology access. These practices focused primarily on limiting the types of devices to which children had access and on filtering their access. In most cases, the regulation of access to devices like phones was supplemented by regular parental checks of browsing history and restricting the use of such devices to communal family spaces. Monitoring regimes, similar to that described below by Sadhbh in relation to her 11-year-old twin daughters, were common:

> 'But what we did buy them were … tablets and they're very good, especially for younger children. They can't get on any of the porn, even by accident. They're very well structured for younger children … Now they can go on Google, but it comes up "This site may not be what Mammy wants" and I have to put in a password.'

Another area of concern for the parents of children under 12 years of age were online interactive games played by children, particularly if these had chatroom facilities. Teresa, mother of two boys aged seven and nine years, reported that she took steps to educate her children about the danger of meeting unsuitable older people in such chatrooms:

> 'I remember with all the stuff that came to light … I sat down with them … and I started talking to them about chatrooms. Now they're not allowed into those rooms … I did have to say, look there's people in there who aren't who they say they are … and you're not allowed chat or give out any [information]. Now they're doing it in school as well … They're doing all the Stay Safe and keeping safe stuff in school as well.'

A number of parents also identified the potential for inappropriate material to 'pop up' when children were searching non-sexual topics. This was seen as a risk in terms of the exposure, but also in terms of children getting into trouble at school with teachers or other adults. Sometimes they thought children feared most the prospect of getting into trouble rather than what they accessed accidentally. Some parents had taken steps to deal with these eventualities by advising their children that if material did come up that they were uncomfortable with, they should bring it to their attention. The need for children to be made aware of the durability of digital material was identified by Sorcha, who noted in the context of sexually themed online talk that 'there's not an awareness' at a younger age that 'everything they put on the Internet is there for life. It can come back to haunt them'. This indicates another arbitrary or artificial distinction between adults and children/young people, given the fact that many adults are also likely to be situated in cultures of online sharing that have everyday, mundane (as opposed to crisis-laden) influences on their offline life.

Relating back to issues of pornography and gender, parents differed in terms of their perception of how interested their sons would be in accessing pornography and in terms of what they considered appropriate parental strategies for responding. One mother who had discovered links to pornography in a search of her 14-year-old son's browsing history was not surprised or disconcerted by this, believing that it was to be expected of boys of his age. Similarly, Sadhbh, who became aware of her 14-year-old son's usage of porn, perceived this behaviour as normal for the child's age; nonetheless, she took steps to limit her son's access to such material and to develop his critical awareness about how pornography is different to real-life sexual intimacy. In contrast, another mother with a 15-year-old son attributed little agency to her son in this regard, perceiving him to be in danger of stumbling across, rather than seeking out, such material. She believed that it was necessary for her to monitor her son's technology usage on a constant basis 'because they could come across pornography or all sorts of other things, you know'. Accessing

pornography was seen as less of an issue for girls. Arlene, a mother of a 15-year-old girl, adopted less strict monitoring practices, preferring instead to trust her daughter to manage the situation or to discuss it with her.

In general, parental control practices around children in their early to mid-teens appeared to be more varied. The parent of a 15-year-old boy had access to and regularly monitored her son's Facebook account, phone and laptop with his knowledge. Other parents of children in their mid-teens engaged in less direct surveillance of their children's usage of technology, focusing instead on negotiating a relationship of trust and on developing their child's critical literacy around the use of technology and social media. Some parents engaged in the dual strategy of educating their teenage children to be discerning users of technology, while at the same time only rarely exercising their agreed right to check on their children's browsing history and social media profile.

A number of parents identified the need to support children in the development of skills which would allow their safe and productive engagement with technology and social media, and thought that strategies of limiting access to such sources were not in themselves an adequate response to the needs of young people in an information society. These discussions framed children and young people as 'digital natives', who made their meanings from the media they engaged with. However, even though many parents presumed their children's interest in digital/ online activity would only increase and become less 'controllable' as they got older, being a digital native did not imply that all children or young people were equally interested in or wholly 'taken in' by online/digital activity. In fact, a number of parents referred to instances where their children demonstrated the capacity to access material that was appropriate for them.

Discussion and physical restriction to online space were often supplemented by security technologies. However, parents reported that they possessed varied rates of technical capacity in relation to knowing how to block certain sites or to monitor and restrict their children's online access. Work-based expertise or access to the expertise of a friend were identified by some parents. For example, Marie commented that she would go to the history of sites visited by her children, but also that a friend of hers would block the accessibility of certain sites. Ross, coming as he said 'from a technology background', commented that he did not have a fear of his daughter using the Internet and that he was 'training her up' in this regard to use it as safely as possible.

Parents reported that they felt they had varying levels of confidence and ability to discuss and regulate their children's engagement with online spaces. Dilemmas relating to privacy and protection issues for young teenage children were significant for some parents. Therese, for example, stated that her approach was to 'restrict access to everything … I'd be very like, you know, postpone everything as much as possible'. Kay commented that she was 'scared' about the accessibility of information for young teenagers on personalised mobile devices, as opposed to collective viewing platforms such as cinema or TV. Andrea also referred to the fact that she talks to her children about 'what you look at' and 'what you don't look at' on their household computer and tablet devices, which are 'in the kitchen'. Kay also remarked that her 13-year-old daughter 'has her gadgets', such as an iPhone, which she 'goes off to bed with'. While discouraging her daughter from doing this, Kay also acknowledged that 'it's a private thing'. She would ask what her daughter is viewing, but conceded 'it's not that you could ever stop [their exposure to advertising]'.

Some parents, such as Emily and Margaret, had access to their children's social networking profiles. Emily did this without her 14-year-old daughter's knowledge or consent, while Margaret ensured that the notifications her 14-year-old twins received were copied in an automated e-mail into her inbox. Other parents, such as Suzanne and Dermot, acknowledged that children find ways to circumvent parents' intrusion by, for example, setting up fake profiles.

6.4   Parental agency around sexualisation and commercialisation

The data gathered for this study found that few parents make official complaints about aspects of the sexualised and commercialised environment they dislike. This supports the evidence on complaints obtained from the regulatory authorities and presented in Chapter 3. The adoption of strategies of informal complaint and resistance were more evident. Reasons put forward for not complaining included scepticism about the utility of individual complaints, lack of knowledge about the grounds and mechanisms for complaints, and fears of being ridiculed and negatively stereotyped.

Barriers to parental complaints-making

Global commerce and the wallpaper effect

The so-called 'wallpaper effect', characterised by the pervasive, globalised nature of commercialisation and sexualisation, was cited by some parents as a key reason for their decision not to make complaints. One couple observed that it is difficult to know what to complain about or who to complain to in a social and commercial world that is so highly sexualised and commercialised; they commented, 'It is all over the place. Where would you start?'

The relative power imbalance between local individual consumers and complex, globalised commercial enterprises – described by one parent as 'a big tidal wave of stuff' – was identified as a significant barrier to individual complaints. The power of global commercial retailers was noted by a number of parents as a factor that made them cynical about the potential impact of any complaint they might make about children's clothing. This position was articulated by Hannah, who alluded to the futility of complaining to a manager of a shop which is part of a big retail chain: 'They're not going to listen to the fact that Hannah from Cork has a big problem with her 11-year old having padded bras. They see it in pounds, shillings and pence.' Similar concerns were expressed by parents in Buckingham's (2011) UK-based research, which highlighted parents' scepticism about whether further regulation could actually address any concerns they would have.

Freedom of choice and the plasticity of sexualisation and commercialisation

Subjective positioning as to what constitutes appropriate consumer items for children was also noted as a deterrent to making complaints. Miriam, the mother of two girls, acknowledged that if 'sexualised clothing' is available in retail outlets, then 'people must be looking for them'. Appeals to freedom of choice for consumers was a defence parents claimed to be deployed by retailers to undermine complaints. Jennifer recalled the dismissive response she received to her letter of complaint about T-shirts with slogans for children being marketed online: 'Their take on it was – well, you don't have to order them if you don't want to and other people do want to and freedom of speech …' The perception held by many parents that a complaint would be trivialised and not taken seriously was also identified by Fiachra as a disincentive to making complaints: 'You need to be able to have a mechanism where you can make a complaint and not have somebody go "Ah, you're just overreacting".'

Limited knowledge of grounds and mechanisms for complaint

Confusion about the grounds for legitimate complaint and the mechanism for making complaints was expressed by some parents who noted that they would be motivated to make a complaint if they witnessed an issue they considered to be grave in terms of its potential negative impact on the welfare of children. This confusion about the grounds for legitimate complaint related to a range of consumption sites, including online content, video games and song lyrics, and by a corresponding lack of knowledge about what, if any, regulatory body existed to handle such complaints. Referring to online content and video games, Leona noted her confusion about

what constituted grounds for complaint and observed that 'you don't know who to go to about things like that anyway'. Julia also emphasised her lack of knowledge about the appropriate body to which to address a complaint: 'It's hard to know who to turn to. I would have no problem complaining if I felt strongly enough about something. But sometimes it is hard to know who to complain to.' The challenges faced by parents in making complaints were highlighted in reports in other contexts which have argued for a single online complaints portal and for a more robust, user-friendly regulatory infrastructure (Rush and La Nauze, 2006; Bailey, 2011).

Cultural and relational barriers to complaint

A minority of parents identified themselves as being proactive about making complaints. Sorcha noted that 'I don't mind complaining about things … When it comes to kids and trying to protect them, I wouldn't have a problem about complaining'. However, she believed that her approach was contrary to the norm and acknowledged that taking a position on an issue can make someone unpopular and can even invite trouble. A cultural reticence among Irish people in relation to making complaints was also alluded to by Annette, a parent of seven children, who had never made a formal complaint about any issue: '… because you do feel no matter what you complain about in Ireland, you feel as if you're in the wrong … You never really complained … You didn't want to be seen to be the one standing up or something'. This interpretation was supported by the data, with quite a few parents acknowledging that despite having concerns about issues, they would be reluctant to make even an informal complaint. Angela commented that although she thought much of the clothing on offer to teenage girls was limited and inappropriate, she would not make as much as an informal complaint about it.

Ciara noted that while parents tend not to complain directly to retailers or officially through formal channels, she had witnessed concern being expressed by parents about sexualised clothing and other issues on online parent discussion forums. She stated: 'I think pretty much everyone just conforms and just goes along with what's there and doesn't complain. Everyone just thinks, well that's just the way it is and nobody really thinks that they can speak up … the only time I ever see anyone that's actually speaking up about any of that stuff is online in kind of forums and stuff.'

Fear of inciting their children's disapproval proved a further disincentive to complaint for some parents. Pauline and Rachel were both of the view that they would be more likely to complain if they were not in the company of their children.

A few parents did acknowledge that the effect of their not making complaints was that what was once extraordinary or shocking became more commonplace and acceptable. As Dermot put it: 'So, you know, even to the best of your ability, you end up slipping or letting it go or whatever, and then … you're accepting that and it becomes the norm … How do you stop that?'

The views expressed here are somewhat ambivalent in that they suggest commercialisation and sexualisation issues may not be high enough on many parents' list of concerns to prompt them to act decisively and to complain. But they also indicate that lack of parental complaint cannot be entirely equated with lack of parental concern and that analysis of rates of formal complaints may also have limited utility as a precise measure of parental concern about aspects of sexualisation and commercialisation.

Localised informal strategies of complaint and resistance

Notwithstanding the barriers identified in the data to parental complaints-making, a number of parents demonstrated agency in making localised informal complaints about commercial activities in their own communities. One parent's complaint about sexually explicit magazines at children's eye level in a local newsagent led to their relocation to the top shelf. However, this approach proved less effective for other parents. Jennifer, the mother of sons aged 19 and 14 years and a daughter aged 11 years, made a number of complaints to retail managers about what she perceived to be 'sexualised' Halloween costumes for girls and trousers with very narrow legs; she felt that her complaints were not taken seriously.

Further examples of such informal complaints included a mother complaining about the lyrics of songs played by a DJ at a school disco and a small number of parents alerting school personnel to issues of concern that related to their own children or their children's friends. Margaret, the mother of twin boys aged 14 years and a daughter aged nine years, alerted the school to a 'choking game' that was happening among a few 13-year-old boys, having discovered a discussion about it while accessing her daughter's Facebook account. When she discovered sexting and comments about sexual practices between nine and 10-year-old children, Suzanne, who has five children ranging in age from 17 down to nine years, reported them to school personnel in the hope that such issues could then be addressed in the school context. On another occasion, she sought the advice of school personnel when she was concerned about her daughter's and others' use of social networking sites. Accounts of contacting the Garda Síochána to inform them of suspected crimes (such as sexual assaults that came to their attention when accessing the social network accounts of their children) were provided by two other parents.

An informal resistance strategy deployed by some parents included withdrawing custom from a particular retail outlet or not buying a particular product again. Dermot, a father of three teenage and pre-teenage children, stated 'I'm sure there have been some incidents where we'd have liked to do something. We're not the best complainers either. We tend to vote with our feet'.

The data in this section emphasise that while parents are slow to invoke formal complaint procedures, they do deploy a range of techniques to effect change or they avoid continuation of practices related to commercialisation and sexualisation which they believe to compromise the safety or welfare of their own or other children.

Social media and collective complaint

A few parents expressed the view that complaints would only have an impact if they reached a certain critical mass. They identified awareness-raising campaigns that had provided the spur for effective collective action. In this context, the media controversy and online petition designed to get Disney to return Merida to her original appearance in the film *Brave* and the UK social media campaign to remove 'lads' mags' from the shelves of retail outlets were identified. Parents also highlighted the important part played by online technologies and social media in mounting anti-consumerism/anti-sexualisation campaigns. The 'Let Girls be Girls' campaign was mentioned in this context. One parent highlighted how an individual concern could be translated into a collective one through effective use of social media sites, while another (Diarmuid, father of two boys aged 12 and five years and a daughter aged 14 years) flagged the potential that the Internet/YouTube and user-generated content provided for challenging commodification. He drew attention to the man who challenged comments from the CEO of Abercrombie & Fitch (that he did not want fat or ugly people wearing their clothes) by giving out this brand of clothing to homeless people and making a viral video campaign about this. Saoirse, Diarmuid's partner, also commented on the potential freedoms afforded by digital technology to allow young people to be creative and individual, and to feel under less pressure to conform to what they experience in their immediate surroundings: 'I think the YouTube bloggers – which is big with teenagers at the moment – is kind of supporting the development of a culture of it's cool to be creative and different and set your own trends.' This understanding of the potential that technology provides for children to be creative, and indeed a focus on what children can bring to technology, echoes findings from the wider literature which highlight the opportunities for learning, freedom, creativity and socialisation that technology and social media offer young people (Byron, 2008; Buckingham, 2009). However, the potential for young people's social media work or creative outputs to be then commodified through new digital technologies is also worthy of attention in this regard.

6.5   Parental perspectives on policy responses to commercialisation and sexualisation

Some parents acknowledged that complete consensus among parents regarding appropriate policy responses to the issues raised by commercialisation and sexualisation would be unlikely. This was indeed the case. However, the data collected revealed that while there were some divergent views in relation to the desirability and feasibility of greater regulation of the Internet and social media, there was a wide degree of consensus on what a desirable policy response would include. Most parents were supportive of a policy response that engaged a wide range of stakeholders and was underpinned by formal and informal critical educational components, more stringent enforcement of existing regulatory mechanisms and some limited and targeted regulatory measures to restrict access to what were considered the most risky dimensions of sexualisation and commercialisation.

Advocating a multi-stakeholder approach

The majority of parents, while acknowledging both their rights and responsibilities as the primary agents involved in educating and protecting their children in relation to commercialisation and sexualisation, articulated support for a broad stakeholder approach to the issues. This position resonates with the wider literature (Buckingham *et al*, 2010; Papadopoulos, 2010). Even the small number of parents who were located at either end of the continuum in relation to the extent to which they felt the State should intervene in relation to the parenting role were of the view that some form of stakeholder approach was needed.

A few parents were critical of what they perceived to be the disproportionate amount of responsibility being put on them to support their children in relation to sexualisation and commercialisation, and noted that they felt ill-equipped and unsupported to exercise the role expected of them. Charlotte, for example, a working mother of three, commented: 'It is hard … obviously you have to be able to influence what children do, but … it's hard to be the "No" voice as well all the time.' In contrast, Nora, mother of two sons aged 19 and 14 years and a daughter aged 18 years thought that there needed to be a rebalancing of responsibilities away from State agencies and towards parents: 'Now I would probably be different from a lot, in that it gets my back up when I see State agencies being responsible for, being blamed for everything that goes wrong. Like, at the end of the day the State can only do what the State can do. They can help you, but the buck stops here.' For the most part, however, parents adopted a position similar to that advocated by Margaret, who thought a community effort was required, and Sorcha, who advocated for an approach that located responsibility with a range of stakeholders in society: 'I think it's mainly our job, but I also think … the school needs to play a role; the State needs to play a role in the laws that they make and that they pass, and to be aware of what's going on; and other parents as well … It's all very well and good for me to be protective of my child, but the minute they walk into somebody else's house, you know, the rules could be completely different.'

Retailers were identified as potential stakeholders with a role to play in addressing parental concerns regarding commercialisation and sexualisation. Rose thought more should be done to encourage retailers to exercise greater social responsibility, particularly in terms of responding to sexualisation: 'I think the big brand companies … also have a responsibility, even on a wider social scale. They have a responsibility to not reinforce and not contribute to the sexualisation of children. I think that's hugely important.' A number of parents acknowledged the value of codes of conduct or practice, particularly in relation to retailers and other commercial bodies, but were also somewhat sceptical that any measures taken would be enforced.

Educating for empowerment and resilience

Most parents acknowledged the benefits of an education and skills-based approach to empowering children to develop resilience in coping with the sexualised and commercial environment in which they live. The value of such an approach is very widely acknowledged in the literature (Byron, 2008; Buckingham, 2009; Papadopoulos, 2010; Bailey, 2011). It is noteworthy, however, that most of the parents considered themselves to be effective informal educators, who encouraged their children to critically evaluate advertising messages and to build up resilience against the potential risks, fear and upset that could be generated through usage of the Internet or social media. This view is also supported in the literature, which acknowledges the significance of parents in transferring consumption habits, preferences and practices to their children (Farrell and Shields, 2007; Wartella *et al*, 2013).

The need for, and value of, both informal and formal education in critical media literacy, aimed at supporting children to be resilient, was widely emphasised by parents, who accepted in the main that as parents they could not always protect their children from encountering any risk. Most also accepted the value of the Internet and social media as sources of information, creativity and social connection with peers. The need to balance the protection and empowerment dimensions of the Internet and social media was alluded to by many parents and well articulated by Ross, father of a nine-year-old girl, who commented in relation to his daughter:

> 'You know, you can't wrap her up in cotton wool. You can't keep her away from all these things. And she would be missing something useful if she wasn't using some of these things. So it's about education and empowering'.

The importance of an educational focus that did more than highlight the risk or dangers associated with new technology was emphasised by a smaller number of parents, who promoted the idea of educational interventions that would not just be 'anti-everything' but would, rather, open up issues for exploration by students and allow them to develop skills to discriminate, make their own choices and learn from positive and negative experiences. This view was succinctly put by Andrea, mother of a 10-year-old boy and nine-year-old girl, who commented: 'You don't sit down and have a big chat about all the dangers that are out in the world. It's just drip, drip, drip and at the same time you're trying to build this resilience into them that you know that things happen'.

Calls for formal and informal education initiatives in sex education and related fields were also made by some parents. Lucy, for example, mother of a 17-year-old girl and 14-year-old boy, highlighted the need for 'an education system that includes non-formal learning … to teach about citizenship and about healthy relationships'.

Most parents felt that schools provided an appropriate setting for education in critical media literacy and in sexuality and relationships. While many parents acknowledged that schools should not be the only setting for such education initiatives, they believed that schools had a significant part to play. Some parents suggested that many issues could be addressed through the existing framework provided by Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). Schools were commended by many parents for work on the Stay Safe Programme and interventions on Internet safety, bullying/cyberbullying, privacy and data protection, and for their actions on particular school-specific crises. Many parents also voiced support for inviting experts into schools to talk with the students (e.g. industry figures, gardaí, cyberbullying experts) and noted the opportunities this provided for generating 'teachable' moments at home or for assisting their children to better identify risky situations and to adopt better harm-reduction strategies to keep themselves safe.

The limited role played by schools in relation to critical media literacy, sex education and anti-sexism was also, however, critiqued by many participants. Some parents advocated for more education in schools on the grounds that schools rarely addressed issues about the media,

consumption, branding or marketing. For example, Saoirse stated, 'I think that is the key, you know … to critique things and to have a high level of media literacy'. Similarly, Lucy, mother of a 17-year-old girl and 14-year-old boy, commented, 'I don't think that young people can understand what the subtext of advertising is unless they are taught to decode it'. Some participants also mentioned the need to create greater awareness among children of gender stereotyping and the need for interventions that give students the opportunity to become more confident in being individuals rather than just conforming. Schools were identified as the optimum educational sites for the types of education described above. Sally, parent to two pre-school children, observed, '[School] is the perfect forum to educate them all together', while Georgia, mother of a seven-year-old boy, believed the advantage of school-based education to be 'that you're learning with your peers … as opposed to "There's my parents going on about it again".'

Regulation and enforcement

There was variation in parental views on the desirability and feasibility of State regulation as a response to concerns about sexualisation and commercialisation. In the main, only a limited role was seen for extending regulation. A few parents expressed scepticism about the effectiveness of State regulation in a globalised media world, characterised by satellite TV, the World Wide Web and powerful global commercial interests. The desirability of statutory intervention was raised by another small group of parents. Ross, father of a nine-year-old girl, favoured educational approaches over more extended and external regulation by the State, as did Dermot who declared himself 'not to be a fan of the nanny state'. Interestingly, those parents who were in favour of greater State regulation, primarily in relation to the availability of pornographic material, couched their suggestions in acknowledgements of what they perceived to be the unpopularity of their position. Therese, for example, mother of three boys aged 4-9 years, commented that although she desired greater and tighter regulation in many spheres which she felt threatened children's well-being, she felt that other parents 'would be more relaxed about exposure to things than we are'.

Karen, mother of a 13-year-old girl, was conscious that a few key arguments stood in the way of people seeking greater regulation and these related to resisting 'the nanny state', State censorship of information and locating the responsibility for these matters with parents. Such arguments, she claimed, were often invoked by others when she made a case for stronger State regulation. Similarly, Doug, father of a boy aged 15 years and girl aged 13, felt that values such as freedom of expression and anti-censorship arguments frequently trumped calls in the western world for more regulation, particularly where the Internet was concerned. He commented:

> 'I would agree that there should be some governmental control … We have a concept of freedom in the west that means no restraint, and I think we're seeing that that does not really equal freedom at all. But some kind of restraint, particularly with things like pornography, betting and gambling online, I think there should be.'

Sally, mother of two pre-school children, argued for stronger self-regulation by companies in the retail and Internet sectors, but felt strongly that Government intervention was acceptable where self-regulatory initiatives were not being taken or were shown to be ineffective. She was critical of claims that nothing can be done to regulate the Internet, arguing instead that something can always be achieved. Justine, mother of a 14-year-old boy and two girls aged 11 and six years, commented, 'It's just a battle for parents and it's not going to get easier unless something is done … There's no harm in doing something. There's nothing negative that can come from blocking pornography'. Similarly, Karen, mother of a 13-year-old girl, argued that the UK Government's efforts to prohibit easy access to pornography, notwithstanding the many barriers to the success of the initiative, reflected an important anti-pornography position that challenged the prevailing misogynistic and sexist culture.

Overall, the data collected did not reveal a strong or widespread desire for more 'technologies of control' (Markovich, 2012). However, there was a subset of parents who favoured greater regulation of availability and access in relation to pornography where children and young people are concerned.

Proposed sites of regulation and restriction

A range of sites/issues for intervention were identified by parents. These included food, television, children's clothing, films and the Internet. The age of children was a key factor influencing parents' concerns about the issues and determining what response they considered most appropriate.

Food

Some parents of very young children (pre-schoolers and children in middle years but pre-teen) were most concerned with TV advertising of unhealthy foods and toys, and reported that they found food shopping with their children to be a stressful or unpleasant experience. Key concerns included the layout and design of food retail outlets, food packaging, the poor nutritional quality and cost of many foods aggressively marketed as suitable for school lunches or to appeal to very young children. Many parents commended the healthy eating policies and programme run by some schools, such as The Food Dudes (*see* http://www.fooddudes.ie/html/parents_what.html), but emphasised the need for such policies to be sustained over time. Parents of teenagers lamented that healthy food policies rarely featured in post-primary schools, where many students sought money from parents to buy their lunches, some from fast food outlets close to their schools. Calls for 'more responsible advertising' were articulated by many parents and, notwithstanding concerns about too much State regulation, many also thought that given the strength of global food companies (and indeed cigarette and alcohol corporations), some State regulation was justified.

Television and films

Some parents of younger children advocated for more advertising-free children's television. Theresa and Donal, parents of two young boys, proposed greater regulation or even banning of advertising on children's television, while Ross, the father of a nine-year-old girl, observed that 'the one premium I would be prepared to pay for was if there was more ad-free stuff'. Parents were generally positive about the watershed that applies in relation to TV, although some argued that in their opinion it was not being adequately observed since it only related to the most obscene or violent content. The effectiveness of a watershed in the context of the multiple ways of accessing TV programmes was also questioned.

Many parents welcomed film classification information and used it to make decisions about what films were suitable for their children to watch. Justine, mother of two girls aged 11 and six years and a son aged 14 years, thought that the film classification scheme was not robust enough on the basis that her daughter saw a movie at a friend's house that really frightened her and which Justine thought should have a rating other than 'PG'. Susie, a mother of three boys ranging in age from two to eight years also questioned the usefulness of a rating classification system that permits children to see films accompanied by parents, but which they are not permitted to see unaccompanied.

Children's clothing

Many mothers of young girls reported that they felt there was little choice available to them in terms of the clothes available for purchase, particularly if their daughters were taller or if they were not the conventional size for their age. Greater choice was advocated in the range and sizes of clothes available in retail outlets where children's clothing is less expensive, as was the need for more 'child-like' styles. Jennifer, the mother of sons aged 19 and 14 years and a daughter aged 11 years, reflected the view of many parents when she observed: 'Well, if it was more rigidly regulated in terms of what shops could stock, then the stuff wouldn't be there to buy and children wouldn't see it and want it ... I don't think most mothers of five or six-year-olds would go online to search for clothes that would say sexy things on them or belly tops for their five-year olds.'

The parents in this study generally had limited awareness of the *Childrenswear Guidelines*, developed by Retail Ireland in 2011 and introduced to the marketplace in 2012. Those parents who did know of the guidelines stated that they were unaware of how successful they had been.

Internet and social media

There was widespread consensus among parents about the lack of relevant, up-to-date information available to parents on children's Internet use. Examples were given of school information evenings where booklets with out-of-date information were distributed and unrealistic guidance was given, such as allowing only very limited social media access. Many parents highlighted the need for the ongoing provision of up-to-date information that reflects new trends in social and digital media usage by different age groups of children. In this context, Kay, mother of two daughters aged 17 and 12 years, provided an account of how an up-to-date and timely leaflet on suitable websites provided for parents by the school proved very useful:

> 'Viber, I haven't a clue. Emily [daughter] was asking could she go on that and I didn't know what it was and she was saying … and in the end she didn't … The school in fact sent out a leaflet which was really useful about these different sites and ones they wouldn't recommend and ones they would … I found that really useful. I'd love more of that for that age because I don't know these sites.'

As discussed above, the parents interviewed held varying views on the potential for successful regulation of Internet access and content. One mother, Elizabeth, suggested the introduction of a classification system for websites (as there is for films and television programmes) so that both parents and children could make more informed decisions about what sites were suitable for access. Rebecca, mother of a girl aged two years and boy aged 12 years, advocated greater filtering of content on social media and search engines that were accessible to children. In particular, she proposed the removal of porn sites from mainstream search engines, proposing instead that they should be accessible only through dedicated search engines:

> 'I would certainly like to see the social media websites increase the filtering content … I understand about the freedom of choice … if people want to Google for porn … there has to be a completely different search engine for that.'

Of the many parents who reported that they had installed protective software on home computers in an effort to limit their children's online access, some were keenly aware of the problems with, and limitations of, such devices. Some also acknowledged that blocking Internet content tended to reduce those 'teachable moments' useful for educating children about the Internet and its associated risks as well as opportunities, and highlighted the need for such measures to be accompanied by critical media literacy education. As Doug, father of a a 15-year-old boy and a 13-year-old girl, acknowledged: 'Total protection is an illusion … It's got to be offset by some value system that will help them work through that.'

Social media networks were a cause of concern among parents of pre-teen and teenage children. The rapid turnover of images and content and the tardiness of the operators of social media sites in removing offensive material were identified as factors that made monitoring difficult. A few parents suggested increasing the minimum age for participation in social network sites to 18 on the grounds that this is the legal age for persons to engage in other risky behaviours, such as drinking alcohol or smoking. However, this framing of social networks as sites of risk only was also not widespread among parents.

6.6   Summary

In summary, parents were acutely aware of the relevance of consumption, advertising and sexual and gendered imagery, experiences, products and practices to the lives of their children. Both the terms 'commercialisation' and 'sexualisation' tended to carry negative connotations for parents, while sexualisation was thought of as possibly the more concerning of the phenomena by almost all of those interviewed. While commercialisation was described by many as all-encompassing and difficult to escape, sexualisation drew on a more diverse set of

themes, reflecting its complexity as well as perhaps the greater array of fears and ambiguities it elicited. Thus, while viewed as inherently problematic by many, sexualisation as a term did not carry the same meaning for all parents. The prevailing themes identified in the study across parents were the perception that sexualisation is a danger, that it involves a loss of childhood innocence, that it is an issue that is related to, and affects, girls more than boys (not least in relation to body image) and that digital/online media is the area of most pressing concern. While these ideas prevailed across the interviews and focus groups, it is not to suggest that they remained uncontested. For example, some parents acknowledged that moral panics about sexualisation and anxieties over social change were not new, and that they tended to ignite parents' motivations to protect children, notwithstanding the realities of children's lives and their own experiences as children which run counter to the idealisation of childhood.

It is clear that parents' own value systems played a key role in the interviews and focus groups. The issue of whether or not specific forms of sexual and consumer citizenship should be recognised among children or young people – and in particular girls – underpinned much of the discussion. While most obvious in relation to sexualisation, there was often a tendency to divide the complexities of a globalised world into two categories of person: the inherently 'knowing' adult and the naturally 'unknowing' child. These discussions tended to presume heterosexuality on the part of young people and there was a highly gendered tendency to create an imaginary line between girls who were 'innocent' and 'sexually unknowing' and girls who were sexually 'knowing' and inherently problematic. The question of how gender roles are organised in society thus underpinned the interviews and focus groups, not least because child-rearing labour – and responsibility for the child's 'proper' upbringing – was shouldered mainly by mothers. The reason we suggest girls were often put into an 'other' group is because, despite concerns raised by some over easy access to pornography and boys' ability to relate emotionally and sexually to girls, boys were rarely subject to the same kind of moral problematisation that girls were. In some instances, parents did move beyond knee-jerk categorisations of children as simply sexually innocent or sexually knowing, and looked for more complicated cultural and political solutions. These included challenging sexism or misogyny in popular culture, or, for example, parents acknowledging the complex gendered contexts in which their daughters have to dress when going out. Again, however, the 'future' sexuality of children and 'emerging' sexuality of young people was largely presumed to be heterosexual and discussions of LGBT youth were rare.

Despite a prevailing tendency to narrowly categorise children as social beings, parents' discussions of their children's behaviours reflected that, like adults, children are a heterogeneous social group with contextually specific wants and needs, whose activities are regulated and constrained in terms of their peer groups, the resources and sites available to them, and the decision-making capacities afforded to them. While parents reported a sense of being overwhelmed at times by aspects of commercialisation, they did not view their children as being all-consumed. Rather, children's attachments to particular brands and symbols was negotiated both with their parents and through their peer groups; children moved in and out of attachments according to trends and the passing of time. Segmented marketing campaigns, ongoing discussions with their parents, age, social sites they frequented and peer groups they engaged with, as well as relationships with extended family members – all these were important factors. Not surprisingly, differences in family context, not least the age of the child (and indeed when he or she was born in relation to technological developments), played a key role in the perceptions, experiences and strategies of parents. The location of the household, in terms of affluence and disadvantage, urban/rural population density, and availability of commercialised sites such as shopping centres and cinemas, also influenced the experiences and approaches of parents.

This explains the contingent and context-specific approach that parents took to varying issues. Parents could not always practise what they believed in a stable or consistent way and indeed, their beliefs changed and/or differed, as they had to relate to a growing child

in a web of relationships and in a constantly changing world. Given the relative level of consensus on what the terms 'commercialisation' and 'sexualisation' were taken to mean, there were, of course, differences in terms of how parents approached particular issues, but also commonalities. For example, many parents would openly discuss the efforts that advertisers make to sell a product. Some commented on the strategy of delaying the purchase of an item for different reasons, which included coming to an assessment of how much a child actually wanted it. Others talked about ensuring that their children avoid a commercial zone (such as a supermarket) where possible and some referenced the purchasing of second-hand items. More generally speaking, many parents put efforts into encouraging children to become 'savvy consumers' who spend their money wisely and save it, rather than attempting to entirely 'escape' consumption or commercialised sites. This involved, for example, finding 'teachable' moments around advertising, comparing the fantasy projected by marketers to the reality, giving pocket money that is earned and, where possible, encouraging or expecting their children to save money. Of course, given tight resources, encouraging children to save, to be discerning or frugal was framed by some parents as a necessity, as opposed to a necessarily 'pleasurable' or learning activity for others.

Given the framing of sexualisation as something of greater concern among parents, it is not surprising that there was a broad-ranging discussion on the topic. A minority of parents reported adopting a 'non-negotiable' approach in terms of their children's dress, particularly as they emerged into teenage years, and at times emphasised the reputation of the family. Others drew sharper moral distinctions with their children and the wider parent group to designate their households/families as 'respectable' and to describe the behaviour of children and families from other households as 'ridiculous', 'irresponsible', 'tasteless' or 'excessive'. Some parents criticised this openly judgemental approach and emphasised the need to compromise if necessary on issues of dress in order to keep the lines of communication open between themselves and their children. However, other parents felt that they had little choice but to adopt a more 'protective' and conservative approach because of experiences that were not imagined, but very close to home.

In relation to digital media, parents' approaches tended to depend on the age of the child. The purchase of their child's first mobile phone was often regarded as a significant moment. It could bring enhanced communication and thus a sense of security between parents and children, but for some parents it also signalled a 'growing up' moment which they felt ambivalent about, particularly in relation to phones with advanced features. Parents reported using multiple strategies that afforded them varying levels of confidence in monitoring their children's Internet activities on mobile devices and computers. Some also discussed the dilemmas around privacy that arose, particularly as children moved into their teenage years.

In terms of identifying supports that might help them with child-rearing in the contemporary context, parents did not favour the widespread extension of regulation. The majority of parents were supportive of stronger educational inputs for both children and parents, which would focus on critical media literacy, cultural studies, sexuality and relationships, to be delivered in both formal and informal settings. Such intervention would, it was thought by parents, support the work they were already doing in educating their children to successfully navigate their social, cultural and online worlds.

The need for a clearer and more easily accessible regulatory and complaints framework was identified by a smaller set of parents, who noted that lack of clarity in this area, combined with a cultural reluctance among Irish people to complain, deterred parents from making formal complaints in relation to issues of concern. Calls for a regulatory approach that would restrict children's access to pornography, and reduce its availability generally, were made by a number of parents, who expressed concern about this issue very specifically.

7. Views of young adults and selected stakeholders

This chapter presents the key findings from the four focus groups undertaken with 12 young adults aged 18-21. While they shared their views and experiences of growing up relatively recently in Irish society, we do not purport that these data, which are limited, offer insights into the views and experiences of all young people. Rather, there were many instances in the focus group discussions where these young adults emphasised the considerable differences rather than the similarities between themselves and their younger siblings. The findings are presented under eight main themes: understandings of commercialisation and sexualisation; commercialisation; sexualisation; sites of commercialisation/sexualisation; negotiations with parents; making complaints; views on education; and measures to address perceived problematic aspects of sexualisation and commercialisation (*see Sections 7.1 to 7.8*). A profile of the young adults interviewed is given in Appendix 3 and the topic guide for the interviews is provided in Appendix 4.

In addition, the findings from interviews with a small number of key stakeholders are also presented in this chapter (*see Section 7.9*). The stakeholders were selected on the basis that they contributed to public discourse on the issues of commercialisation and sexualisation, and/or have experience of working in social settings on child safety and protection issues. Again, it should be noted that the small stakeholder participant sample did not permit strong exploration of the range of perspectives that might be expected if a larger and more diverse stakeholder population was engaged in the research. The findings are presented under five main themes: sexualisation; the Internet – opportunities and harms; online pornography; conversations with children about sexuality, education and regulation; and sexualisation – guidelines for children's clothing.

7.1   Understandings of commercialisation and sexualisation

Young adult participants held relatively consistent views on what constituted 'commercialisation' and regarded it as predominantly a negative, influential force in children's lives. It amounted to pressure to own certain branded goods in order to fit in with their peers and social groups. June (aged 21, with a 24-year-old brother and a 16-year-old sister) thought it involved 'the pressure to have the same kind of stuff that your friends have or you know the richer people or the popular people have certain things and then you want to have that because you think people won't like you as much if you don't have it'.

Children or young people dressing up and acting older and more sexual than their years was a recurring theme in the young adults' discussions of what the term 'sexualisation' encompassed. Nearly all of the female participants in the four focus groups stated that children/young people today dress in an age-inappropriate and more 'sexualised' style than they themselves did when they were of a similar age. The participants perceived sexualisation to be an external influence coming from advertising, social networking and online sites, peer pressure and the media. Fiona (aged 20) evoked the loss or shortening of contemporary childhood as a facet of sexualisation: 'They're growing up so, so fast ... I know they have a childhood, but it's very different ... to the one I had.' John (aged 20) thought that 'sexualisation' was an issue that generated more public concern in society than commercialisation, while Eoin (aged 19) saw the commercialisation and sexualisation of children as intertwined and perceived them both as harmful, exploitative influences.

The focus group data revealed that young adults tended to view those younger than themselves as passive recipients of negative marketing and cultural influences. As such, their understandings of commercialisation and sexualisation were of these phenomena exerting a detrimental influence on children and young people, and not as socially embedded sites of activity and creativity.

7.2   Commercialisation

Consumption practices/brands

When asked about their consumption practices, nearly all of the young adults in the four focus groups stated that they mainly shopped in one particular retail outlet associated with fast-changing fashion lines at lower prices, with some stating that they also go to other stores to purchase going-out clothes or clothes of better quality. However, another participant in Focus Group 1 noted that when she was younger, certain retail outlets were identified as being 'too common' for her, highlighting how shopping stores come to be perceived as catering for different social class groups. In comparison to the female participants, John (aged 20) explained that he did not go shopping at all for clothes, receiving most of his clothes as presents from his parents. A shift away from traditional modes of shopping was evident among some female participants, such as Sarah and Alice (both aged 20) who stated that they did a lot of online shopping for clothes because they believed it to be cheaper and more convenient. It was also strongly asserted in Focus Group 4 that there could be more pressure on children/ young people in urban areas to dress in certain ways and/or buy certain products than might be experienced by young people who live in rural areas.

All of the young adults were cognisant of the need to get value for their money rather than spending a lot of money on premium, expensive brands. Maeve (aged 19) stated 'cheaper is the best', while John said 'whatever, as long as it's nice and it's cheap enough'. Some participants commented that the premium products they owned, such as UGG boots and Louboutin shoes, had been received by them as presents and Alice (aged 20) thought it best to mix expensive designer clothing with cheaper items. Many of the participants explained how it was difficult for them as students to justify spending large amounts on branded goods and products. However, mobile phones and technology proved to be exceptions: most of the young adults owned or desired to own the most advanced mobile technologies. According to Elaine (aged 22), 'if a new one comes out I'd do anything in my power to try and get it' and, as she noted, being able to access the same applications facilitated offline friendships online. June (aged 21) described how she likes to buy the newest technology products, which are seen as desirable and popular at that time, but she acknowledged that they become obsolete very quickly.

Keeping up with the newest technology was identified by all of the participants in Focus Group 2 as one of the biggest pressures in terms of owning certain brands and premium products. In contrast to other participants, Eoin (aged 19) and Fiona (aged 20) were conscious of price rather than keeping up with specific brand names and bought mobile phones that they believed represented value for money.

Although many of the participants explained that it was never really that important to them to have the most expensive product or brand, there had been particular instances when they were younger where they felt under pressure to own certain products, such as a particularly expensive brand of make-up. However, in another focus group, Ann (aged 20) explained that when she started wearing make-up, she was influenced by peers who were talking about using only one particularly expensive brand. She described how she continued to use the cheaper brand, resisting the pressure to conform, and revealing young people's potential to respond in different ways to pressures associated with consumption.

The transient nature of brand popularity was noted by many participants. As Ann (aged 20) explained, brands are 'in fashion for a while and then you forget about them'. The young adults in Focus Group 2 identified MAC make-up, Apple technologies and Hollister apparel as particularly popular brands among their age groups and younger. Abercrombie & Fitch clothing, Jack Wills clothing and Starbucks were identified in Focus Group 3 as the brand names perceived to be strongly marketed to people their age. June explained that when her 16-year-old sister and her friends go shopping, they would spend the whole day in Hollister and

talk about their purchases for weeks afterwards. The participants in Focus Group 1 identified branded tracksuits as items that they would splurge on, with Elaine (aged 22) asserting 'I don't think I ever actually get branded clothes apart from tracksuits, to be honest'.

When questioned about their opinions on brand copies, all of the participants in Focus Group 1 stated that they did not mind such goods since there was not much of a difference between them and the real merchandise. Branded products were represented by the participants as being of more importance to children/younger people, or indeed to their peers, than they were to the participants themselves. This finding could be understood as a bid by the participants to present themselves as more 'savvy' consumers than their peers or younger counterparts. By way of illustrating what she perceived to be the negative influence of brand advertising on very young children, Sinead (aged 21) told a story about her nine-year-old neighbour who constantly talked about wanting a pair of Louboutin shoes, which retail for approximately €700. Similarly, Sarah and Alice (both aged 20), who worked as elves at a Christmas grotto, expressed their surprise that children as young as five or six were asking for premium products for Christmas such as iPhones and iPads.

When asked about their shopping experiences with their parents, primarily their mothers, the young adults in Focus Groups 1, 3 and 4 stated that in most cases they would come to an agreement or compromise with their parents over what was appropriate to buy. Elaine (aged 22) was the only participant who reported that her mother usually bought her items that she did not want and noted that her mother made her selections based on what she thought her peers liked and what would help her best fit in with them.

Treasured possessions

The majority of the young adults noted that their mobile phone was the one possession that they currently 'could not live without'. Alice (aged 20) told how she had lost her phone and 'it was like the end of the world', while Gary (also aged 20) explained 'if I lost my phone I [would] feel like my two arms have been cut off'. John (aged 20) stated 'you can live off your phone if you want', highlighting the phone's considerable utility in the lives of contemporary young adults. The instant access to social networking sites/Internet and the availability of a wide variety of applications (apps such as Instagram, Snapchat and Viber) were quoted as being other reasons why mobile phones play such a prominent role in their lives.

Notwithstanding their attachment to their phones, the most treasured possession identified by each participant was, in all cases, something from their childhood that had sentimental value to them, such as a teddy bear, old birthday cards, gifts of jewellery or a hand-knit jumper.

Advertising

On the topic of advertising, many of the young adults in the four focus groups believed that children and young people are heavily influenced to purchase what they see advertised on television, in magazines or online. On the topic of the persuasive intent of TV advertisements, Eoin (aged 19) stated that many of the advertisements influence and manipulate children/young people subconsciously. He argued that when a person is subjected to many different advertisements on a daily basis, it is difficult not to be influenced either directly or indirectly by them. Advertisements identified as particularly offensive were those that received much publicity and included a Hunky Dory and a Club Orange advertisement, which some participants criticised for using sexualised images of women to sell their products. The participants in another focus group discussed the impact of placing merchandise at children's eye level in shops, claiming that it made it more difficult for parents to shop with very young children. All the young adults interviewed tended to see advertising, popular culture and commodities as negative features or the wallpaper in children's lives.

Allowances/pocket money/expenditure/saving

Three out of the four focus groups were asked explicitly whether they received pocket money or an allowance from their parents when they were younger. From a total of 12 participants, five reported receiving pocket money or an allowance from their parents: two received €5 a week, two received €10 a week, while one received €25 a week (which was considered a significant amount by other young adults present). The €5-10 range was broadly in keeping with what the parents interviewed reported (*see Chapter 6*). A smaller number of participants explained that they were given money by their parents only when they needed it, for example, if they were going to the cinema. Four out of the five participants who received pocket money or an allowance were obliged to do chores around the house in order to earn the money. Maeve, for example, described how she used to receive payment from her mother to care for her siblings (a nine-year-old boy and a 20-year-old girl who has special needs) when her mother was at work.

In terms of saving practices and attitudes to saving, nearly all of the young adults in the focus groups stated that they were encouraged by their parents when they were younger to save money, with Eoin (aged 19) asserting that he had always been 'an avid saver' without any encouragement from his parents. One of the female participants explained that if she wanted something, she would save most of the amount required and her parents would typically provide the balance. All nine of the participants in three of the focus groups recalled saving most of the money they received from their Communion and/or Confirmation. The topic of saving schemes in schools was discussed, with the majority of participants describing how they participated in the 'Sammy Stamps' scheme when they were in primary school, which they viewed positively.

When asked about their current spending and saving habits, all participants in Focus Group 1, who were mainly full-time students, stated that it had become more difficult to manage their money effectively as they had grown older. They reported that they had become more aware of the price of items and value of money, and that their circumstances dictated that they put more emphasis on purchasing what they needed rather than what they wanted.

7.3   Sexualisation

Dress, gender and social class/ethnicity

The gendered dimensions and constructions around issues relating to sexualisation were highlighted when participants were asked if they ever wanted to dress in clothes that their parents considered were too adult or sexual for them. While a large majority of the female participants stated that their parents, on at least one occasion, argued with them over what they were wearing, none of the male participants had ever had this discussion with their parents because, as Eoin (aged 19) stated, 'I don't know if there's such a thing as adult boys' clothes'. John (aged 20) expanded on this – 'because boys all wear the same sort of things anyway'. Taking both genders into consideration, Eoin articulated that 'I presume it does exist on both sides, but it's more kind of concerning when it's girls … involved'. In two focus groups, girls from the Traveller community were identified as dressing in a more overtly sexualised and adult way than their settled peers; however, this was understood by the participants as an aspect of the girls' identification as Travellers and not as a reflection of their values or conduct, which they perceived to be very moral. Particular styles of dress were perceived to be markers of people's identities, signifiers of their social status and class positioning. As Sarah (aged 20) explained, 'Everyone sort of judges. Like, you know, if you see a group coming down there in Nike tracksuits and you're going to be, like, they're lower class'. In contrast to this, Hollister was identified as a brand that signified affluence and social standing. The majority of the female participants stated that they were between 13 and 15/16 years of age when they started to dress in more feminine and 'sexy' clothing and wearing more make-up. Daisy (aged 21) commented that 'When I was about 14, the skirts got shorter' and for many of the female participants, this

change in style of clothing coincided with the transition from primary school to secondary school and entry into (hetero)sexual youth sexual culture. As June (aged 21) asserted: 'I never really noticed clothes when I was in primary school. I just used to never think about it. But then in secondary school, I would have noticed it more and cared more about what I was actually wearing, like, you know, certain clothes and stuff like that.'

Nearly all of the female participants acknowledged that the pressure to conform and dress in sexualised clothing was a phase that they went through, with all of the participants in one focus group agreeing that the pressure to conform was intense between the ages of 13 to 18. This phase, Daisy (aged 21) explained, ends for many when they complete post-primary education and feel somewhat freer to express their own preferences and individuality. Ann (aged 20) remembered the sense of competition among people in her peer group over how they dressed, with everyone wanting to dress that little bit older and, in turn, more sexualised than the next. She made the connection between the types of clothing young people wear and the pressure they feel to conform, which in her experience was not the same everywhere. She described that she used to live in a 'rougher area' and the pressure to dress more provocatively and sexualised was greater compared to the rural community to which she and her family relocated.

According to the female participants, pressure to conform to social groups and the need to be seen as attractive to the opposite sex were the two main motivating factors explaining why girls' dress can be sexualised. Conformity, they argued, at times took precedence over individuality. As Daisy stated, 'You'd feel embarrassed or something' if you were seen as different from the group. Nearly all of the female participants who stated that they had argued with their parents over the way they were dressed admitted that they took their parents' advice (primarily their mothers) and opinions on board, and compromised by changing their outfits. They also explained how they would have changed into something more sexual (such as crop tops and mini-skirts) in their friend's house without their parents knowing, prior to going out. Not dressing in a similar way to peers, participants in one focus group suggested, required great strength of character from young people, who would most likely be subject to teasing or 'horrible' negative comments by peers. All the participants agreed that what a person wears is strongly informed by a person's desire to identify with their social group or friends.

Although pressure to conform to a particular dress code declined with age, many of the female participants stated that they do wear short dresses and high heels when they go out at night. They reported that they did not like to feel 'underdressed', to stand out or to be seen as unattractive or having not made the effort. Daisy (aged 21) commented, 'It's a dress. It's like what you have to wear at our age, isn't it?', indicating that what she considered inappropriate for a younger girl was appropriate for her as a young adult. She also commented, 'I don't actually like wearing those clothes. I don't like wearing short skirts, especially not with tights. But like I always go out without them'.

The data reveal, as in the literature, how the self-sexualisation practices of young adult women are experienced by them in very contradictory ways (Renold and Ringrose, 2011; Thompson and Donaghue, 2014; Jackson and Vares, 2015). At the same time as these practices afford them enjoyment, fun, male attention and confidence interacting with peers, they can also cause them discomfort, doubt, unwelcome attention and feelings of pressure to conform. June (aged 21) recalled a period when she was younger and resisted wearing the 'sexy' clothes she did not like, but felt expected to wear. While she enjoyed the comfort it afforded her personally, she acknowledged that she found it difficult among her wider peer group. She also recalled personalising her school uniform in non-sexualised ways or wearing comfortable items of clothing or footwear to school, which got her into trouble with school authorities. The data reveal the complicated and ambivalent relationships that these young adult women have with sexualised culture, whether they are trying to participate in it or not. The female participants in the research also claimed that they do not dress in such an overtly sexy way as younger girls do these days.

An interesting point discussed in one focus group was in relation to the dress code that many bars and clubs adopt. The right of admission, it was stated, is reserved for people who are seen to be in the 'appropriate' dress, which was smart casual for men and overtly feminine/sexy for women. This, it was argued, also puts pressure on girls/women to dress in a particular way when going out socialising for the night. Sarah (aged 20) argued that many places would not admit a girl who appeared as if she did not make an effort or if someone appeared 'sort of scummy … rougher', indicating that alternative ways of dressing are not always available to young women.

In terms of sexualisation and what groups are most impacted by it, Ann (aged 20) commented 'when I would hear the term, I think of kids 12 and younger'. However, she proceeded to state that 'I would never think it's [sexualisation] actually an issue because everyone does it. But that's an issue in itself'. Elaborating on why it is mainly understood as a 'problem' for children, Daisy (aged 21) stated, 'When you're a teenager, it's kind of a phase you'll go through and you will get over it. But when you're a kid, it's kind of built into you', thus perceiving sexualisation as something which is external to children and imposed on them. Gary (aged 20) described how child beauty pageants and dancing contests are 'sexualised' in terms of the way the children dress, the cosmetics they use and the way they are expected to behave and act. He explained that he perceived younger children as being 'too young' to dress and act in these ways; it is more serious, in his opinion, when younger children dress and act in ways not appropriate for them. Elaine (aged 22) put it succinctly – 'If you're a child, you're a child'.

Children's clothing guidelines

None of the young adult participants in the research had heard of the *Retail Ireland Childrenswear Guidelines* (2011) and when the purpose of the guidelines was explained, participants expressed doubt as to their effectiveness. Fiona (aged 20), for example, stated 'I don't know that it's going to work really'. The majority of the participants thought that if a child or a young person wants to dress in a certain fashion or type of clothing, he or she will find a way to source such clothing. Eoin (aged 19) was dubious as to how the guidelines could be successfully implemented and asked 'How can you define what's acceptable and what's not acceptable' in relation to children's clothing.

Availability of sexualised clothing for children/young people

The availability of sexualised and overtly sexualised clothing for children and young people, such as bras and thongs for girls, were viewed by the young adults as being wholly inappropriate. One participant stated, 'It's disgusting … they are still babies'. Other participants strongly criticised logos or slogans such as 'swag' or 'sexy' on children's clothing, arguing that these are age-inappropriate, sexually suggestive and entirely unsuitable for children and young people.

7.4   Sites of commercialisation/sexualisation

Mobile phones and technology

As outlined above, all of the young adults participating in the focus groups stated that their mobile phone was the most important consumer item they owned. They all agreed that with advances in technology in recent years, mobile phones are increasingly becoming a site of sexualisation for children and young people. Although they acknowledged that mobile phones/technology can be a source of influence in all age groups, they argued that children and young people are particularly susceptible to being influenced in terms of both sexualisation and commercialisation. This manifests itself in the form of pressure from both society and social peer groups to own certain models of mobile phones and to send explicit, often overtly sexualised photographs to peers and members of the opposite sex ('selfies').

153

Participants discussed how 'selfies' potentially generated affective experiences for young people of approval and admiration and opportunity for self-confidence; however, they were also attuned to the negative affective experiences that could result from such self-presentations going wrong. 'Selfies', they claimed, also generated much parental concern. Since the majority of children/young people today have mobile phones with immediate Internet access, as well as access to different apps such as Snapchat, the participants argued that it is increasingly difficult to control what they access. Fiona (aged 20), Eoin (aged 19), Alice (aged 20), John (aged 20) and Sarah (aged 20) all reported that they owned their first mobile phone at the age of 12. Many of them got their first phones from their parents for emergency use. However, they noted that mobile phones have gone well beyond simply texting and calling, which would have been their primary use when they were younger, and now have sophisticated advanced features, such as cameras and video facilities. Fiona cited the case of her 15-year-old sister who was recently given an iPhone by her parents.

The issue of boys having pornographic or sexually explicit material on their mobile phones was also mentioned. June (aged 21) believed that 'it's like a competition or something' in terms of the amount of 'pornographic' content they have on their phones. Noting how difficult it is for parents to regulate what their children access on their mobile phones, Sinead (aged 20) stated: 'When you're that age, their parents have a right to see what they're doing. But sure you can put a lock on it and a password and nobody can get into your phone. So nobody knows what they are doing.'

The participants in one focus group noted that in the past, pornography and pornographic images were expensive to download to phones, although some young males still purchased them. However, with readily available access to the Internet and apps, pornographic content can now be downloaded or sent for free, considerably increasing the opportunities for children to view age-inappropriate, sexually explicit content. As John (aged 20) stated, 'Now you can send a picture on your iPhone for free, whereas back then if you wanted to send a picture it was like €3 or €4'.

Social networking/social media sites

Facebook was identified as the primary social networking site, with one participant, Eoin (aged 19), commenting, 'I signed two days ago … I finally caved in to the pressure'. Twitter was also mentioned by two of the participants, but it was less commonly used among the other participants as a means of social networking/communication. The majority of participants were in agreement that social networking sites such as Facebook were sites of sexualisation and commercialisation for children/young people in terms of how sexually explicit and age-inappropriate material is made readily available and accessible on these sites and how they target children/young people as consumers through advertisements. John (aged 20) argued that you do not have to search for pornography because 'even accidentally you can come across it'. The participants explained how there is a lot of pressure on children/young people to join these social networking sites at much younger ages than the participants themselves did. Maeve (aged 19), Elaine (aged 22) and Sinead (aged 21) all stated that they would have first started social networking between the ages of 13 and 15 years by joining Bebo, although they argued that Bebo was a lot more child/teen-friendly than the social networking sites available to children today.

One of the participants, Maeve (aged 19), discussed how her younger sister (aged 17) and her brother (aged nine) are currently active on the social networking site Ask.fm. She thought that the anonymity afforded to people on this site gave a licence to young people to participate by posting very hurtful, negative and degrading comments about others. She described how users of Ask.fm had targeted both her and her siblings in a very personal attack and her sister had to defend herself on it from hurtful, cruel jibes about being 'too skinny'. All of the participants stated that social networking sites can facilitate bullying or cyberbullying within peer groups. Speaking about the nature of such sites, Sinead (aged 21) explained how 'once you put

something up, it spreads so fast … there's no hiding it'. Adding to this, Elaine (aged 22) argued: 'If someone puts up an embarrassing picture of someone that they didn't want up there, they can easily get mocked or something over it … The picture could go up like in two seconds and you could be guaranteed about 2,000 people have seen it. So even if it's deleted in four seconds, there's still a lot of people who will have seen it.'

Aware of the dangers associated with social networking sites, Elaine explained how her secondary school blocked sites such as Facebook on the premises, although as she explained 'we were able to get around the blocks … that was when we were 14. We were able to beat the system'. It was acknowledged that children try very hard to access what is denied to them.

Speaking about her online experiences growing up, Maeve (aged 19) recalled, 'It wasn't innocent, but it was grand … like when we were younger, there was no Internet properly, broadband, Facebook, all that and I'm actually delighted there wasn't'. All of the participants in the four focus groups were in agreement that children/young people today are becoming increasingly influenced and may be pressurised by peers and social peer groups to upload photographs of themselves ('selfies') wearing sexualised clothing on social networking sites. The pressure to have people 'like' your photo on these sites was also noted. As Daisy (aged 21) explained, 'There's so many pictures on Facebook of girls trying to show off their bodies and stuff'.

Participants in Focus Group 2 discussed how children/young children may be under pressure to conform and imitate what they see their peers and/or older relatives doing online. However, they claimed that they themselves no longer feel under pressure to do this. Somewhat paradoxically, when asked about online social networking activity, Fiona (aged 20) described it as if it was a problem rather than an enjoyable activity, but crucial for her feeling part of a peer group: 'It's a lot of hassle. I'd love to get off it, but I'm just afraid in case [I miss] something.'

Internet/online risks/pornography

All of the participants believed that the Internet and online activity was a key influence on the lives of children and young people today in terms of sexualised material and commercial advertising and marketing campaigns. Easier access to pornography was a topic discussed by participants in the four focus groups. As Elaine (aged 22) argued, 'Well, if you look hard enough, you'll find anything'. However, many of the participants explained how pornographic images and content come up unintentionally in the form of 'pop-up' advertisements on other webpages and sites and how this can be a big concern for parents. Expanding on this further, Maeve (aged 19) commented:

> 'If I'm on Facebook, an ad or something will come up, like pop-up things if you're watching things – like if you watch something on Watch Series [online site showing TV series and films] … these pop-up things keep coming up and if you click on the 'x' button [to exit the screen], it will take you to the website … That's happened to me loads of times and it says that I'm watching porn … It's sickening and it just keeps popping up because it's just constantly there.'

Ann (aged 20) also explained that when she is streaming things online or watching a TV series, the pop-up advertisements on the side of the page are for pornographic sites or dating websites.

Participants in one focus group did blame pornography and sexually explicit material for placing unrealistic expectations and pressures on people in terms of their physical appearance and sexual performance. They also believed that young people would be more susceptible than older persons and thought it a much more normalised feature of society/culture that males look at these images. Use of pornography, it was argued, promoted the objectification of women and influenced the interactions of some males with women. This negative interaction and sexist view of females by males, Ann (aged 20) stated, was also evident in nightclubs

and bars in the way that some males behaved and acted towards young women, sometimes simulating pornographic scenes or conduct rather than relating to girls respectfully and as equals.

Advertisements, TV programmes, films, celebrity culture, toys

The young adults in all four focus groups also identified sources which they believed acted as sites of commercialisation and sexualisation for children/young people. Advertising was frequently mentioned. They generally subscribed to a cause-and-effect or imitation analysis of media influence. Alice (aged 20) reckoned that advertisements (both online and in print) that use young child models dressed in sexualised clothing and wearing a lot of make-up influence children to emulate them and dress and act in a similar way. These models, as Sarah (aged 20) argued, are normally 'stick-skinny' and give out unrealistic expectations about body weight and femininity – 'That's not your average person really'. John (aged 20) thought females are more influenced by advertisements than males. Eoin (aged 19) asserted that advertisements and advertising campaigns targeted at children/young people can be overtly and subtly very influential; he explained that 'it can be direct or it can be … just putting pressure on them to do something … just kind of pushing them in a certain way'.

Television programmes and films aimed at a younger audience were also identified as sites of commercialisation and sexualisation for children/young people. Shows such as *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* (a reality TV show featuring the family of child beauty pageant contestant Alana 'Honey Boo Boo' Thompson), according to Gary (aged 20), sought to glorify child pageants and influence children/young people to purchase cosmetics and dress and act in a certain, more sexualised way. Maeve (aged 19) commented in relation to child pageants that 'it doesn't leave them be a child really'. TV shows on the Disney Channel such as *Victoria* were also mentioned by participants in Focus Group 2 as being sites of influence on children/young people. They explained how the actors are portrayed as positive role models; however, the activities that they have become associated with (such as cheating on their boyfriends) might, they believed, influence children/young people to act in a similar way. Offering a further explanation, Ann (aged 20) detailed how the children she babysits, who are between six and 10 years of age, watch *Victoria* and seem to be strongly influenced by her. Daisy (aged 21) also drew attention to the influence of movie characters: 'I think movies have a huge impact. Like when I was little, I remember I'd watch a movie and straight away I'd be trying to do my hair the same way as the girl in the movie or picking out clothes that looked the same.'

The influence that celebrities (such as Miley Cyrus) and music videos in general have on children/young people was discussed in Focus Groups 1 and 2. According to June (aged 21), the clothes that her 16-year-old sister and her friends wear are heavily influenced by music videos. Daisy (also aged 21) believed that 'music channels and stuff' are one of the main influences that lead younger generations to dress in sexualised clothing and engage in risky behaviours at a younger age. Participants also commented on how teenage discos and house parties are places where this type of behaviour and dress is most evident, and where children/young people work at conforming so that they fit in with peers.

According to Gary (aged 20), toys such as Bratz, which are aimed and marketed to children/young people, are influencing a whole generation to become preoccupied with their physical appearance and dress. He stated, 'The way they're dressed up, it's trying to say to the child you must look like this'. Dolls, Maeve (aged 19) argued, are now being made to look more like adults rather than children/young people, which is in stark contrast to the toys she would have played with when she was young, such as Baby Born and Barbie. She commented, 'They don't have the normal dresses now anymore. It's all like bikinis and all that stuff'. There was consensus among participants in Focus Group 1 that some dolls marketed to children/young people today have a more raunchy appearance. One participant who had a young daughter commented on the almost inevitability of gender stereotyping of toys, explaining 'I think that's the way things are … That'll never change. It's the way we're brought up like'.

7.5   Negotiations with parents

Conversations between parents and research participants

None of the young adult research participants could recall having ever engaged in much conversation with their parents on issues around commercialisation, such as persuasive strategies, marketing techniques and advertising campaigns. They stated that they were more likely to discuss and debate these issues with their peers, members of their social groups and their siblings rather than with their parents. Fiona (aged 20) suggested that parents were also subjected to marketing and advertising techniques in much the same way as children.

Conversations on issues around sexualisation and online access/protection were found to be more common between parents and the research participants. However, such conversations were predominantly in relation to their younger siblings rather than about the research participants themselves. Demonstrating this, June (aged 21) discussed how her grandmother and uncle had asked her to look after her younger sister, now aged 16 years, and to monitor her online/social networking activity. By open admission, June described herself as 'the spy' ('never been perceived … but I do it anyway') and explained that this is justified because she feels that the online behaviour of the younger generation can sometimes be very manipulative and hurtful. Although she thought that her sister could be quite resilient to these tactics, she believed that a lot of children/young people today are placed under pressure to conform to their social peer groups. Maeve (aged 19) also admitted to checking her sister's Bebo account when her sister was younger.

A number of participants discussed their own experience of parents checking their social networking activity. For example, June recalled her father viewing some negative comments directed at her on Bebo, which she claimed she took little notice of but which he considered to constitute a case of 'serious cyberbullying'. She also commented that her father 'went through a Facebook phase, like a year or two ago' and when he disapproved of her conduct on Facebook, she would 'get this almighty text about future employers and things like that'.

Older siblings offering advice to younger siblings was considered a relatively effective strategy and more likely to have the desired effect than parents giving advice. As Daisy (aged 21) noted: 'I think it works better from siblings … because parents [can be] kind of so strict that you're not going to tell them anything … If your parents said something, you just think they're trying to control you at that age'. June (aged 21) pointed out that, unlike parents, older siblings are perceived by those younger as people who 'know stuff'.

Negotiations between parents and research participants

Clothes and technological devices (such as mobile phones and laptops/computers) were identified as the two main issues up for negotiation between parents and the research participants when they were growing up. Although the participants admitted that at times they pestered their parents to purchase what they wanted, they revealed that in the majority of instances when parents refused their request they accepted their decisions. Daisy (aged 21) noted that she used to try and play her parents off against each another to get the products she wanted, although she admitted that this only worked a few times before her parents figured out the tactic she was using. Ann (aged 20) reported that when she was 13, she was allowed to join the social networking site Bebo, but only under her parents' supervision and with random spot checks; she said she accepted this and viewed her parents' actions as acceptable.

7.6   Making complaints

Making complaints

None of the young adult participants could recall themselves or their parents making any kind of a complaint about marketing campaigns, advertisements, either online and/or in shops. One of the male participants was of the opinion that people do not complain because they always assume someone else will, or they have a fear of making a complaint. As Gary (aged 20) noted, it sometimes takes one individual to encourage others: 'I would if someone else complained'. A reluctance to be the one to complain about anything was evident in the focus group discussions.

Complaining about social networking sites

In relation to social networking sites, it was ascertained from many of the participants in Focus Group 1 that they would not report inappropriate content (sexual or otherwise) to the relevant authorities because they had never made the connection between what they viewed on these sites and what might be accessed by children and younger people. As Elaine (aged 22) observed, 'It wouldn't come into my head when I'm reading it … there's like eight-year-old kids who are reading this'. Although sites such as Facebook have an over-13 years age restriction, Sinead (aged 21) was cynical about this, stating, 'There's no point putting an age limit on it because there already is and it's not really working'. In one focus group, participants expressed doubt that any action or change would result if they lodged a complaint about a social networking site.

Complaints within the family/social group

Regarding disagreements or complaints made within the family unit itself, Eoin (aged 19) described how an argument ensued between his parents and his 14-year-old sister (which resulted in her being disciplined) when they saw photographs that she and her friends had put online. The issue of unrealistic body images and expectations of females being portrayed in print, online and in TV advertisements were discussed among participants, as were the presumed negative influences that these have on people's confidence and self-esteem, particularly children and young adults. This was an issue that they found themselves occasionally discussing with friends after seeing certain advertisements, but at the same time they thought it was not a matter for complaint.

7.7   Education and media/Consumer literacy

Another topic addressed during the focus groups was schooling and the education (if any) the participants had received on media studies, commercialisation and relationships/sexuality. All of the participants had received some education in media literacy and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in primary and/or secondary school, although the extent of this seemed to be determined by the courses students enrolled in and whether the schools they attended were single-sex or mixed.

Media literacy education in schools

According to Eoin (aged 19), media literacy was only briefly addressed in the Junior Certificate Business and Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) courses in his school, where the focus was predominantly centred on how to recognise marketing/advertising techniques used. Gary (aged 20) described how he and his peers were only briefly introduced to the topic of media literacy in Transition Year when they were doing a project entitled 'Mini-company'. Although the majority of participants were in agreement that different aspects of the media

were briefly spoken about in their Business and/or CSPE classes, it was noted that not all students choose Business as one of their subjects; therefore, some students received no media literacy input when they were in secondary-level education.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in schools

When asked about Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), participants reported different experiences of how this was addressed in the schools they attended. Gary (aged 20) described how at the end of his last day in primary school, his class got a half-hour talk about sex, albeit a general one. When asked about what was discussed, he said that the talk was focused 'more on the birds and the bees' than on anything else. Other participants noted that they would have been properly introduced to relationships/sexuality education in secondary school, but not on a consistent basis, and many criticised the approach and teaching methods employed. Daisy (aged 21), for example, explained how in her all-girls school, the teacher had advised abstaining from any sexual activity rather than educating them about sex, observing 'she was like, "Oh, boys are dirty, stay away from them" '. Others who attended single-sex schools described how they would have only received education on relationships and sexuality through once-off talks from external agencies.

Ann (aged 20), who was a student in a mixed secondary school, described how difficult it was to learn anything about relationships and sexuality in SPHE classes because other students kept making jokes and comments about what was being discussed; she reckoned this was mainly due to the immaturity of certain students and their familiarity with the teachers who were delivering the talks. As part of their education on relationships and sexuality, Ann recalled how her teacher showed the class an episode of *Teen Mom* in order to illustrate the realities of teenage sex and teenage pregnancies. She was critical of this approach, remarking 'That's grand, but it's an MTV show. It's not reality, you know'. She also stated that education on contraceptives, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and pregnancy was very vague or not addressed at all.

The majority of participants in the focus groups thought that a more informal, conversationalist approach to relationships and sexuality education by trained teachers or professionals would be more effective. They also felt that such an approach would make them feel more comfortable and able to ask questions or voice any concerns or queries they had. Daisy (aged 20) praised the talk she received in school, since 'it was more like a discussion than being told "Don't do this, don't do that" '. Ann (aged 20) also endorsed this approach because 'people really relax then and they ask the questions that they actually want to ask'.

Alice and Sarah (both aged 20) believed that people are becoming sexually active at a younger age in contemporary society. As Sarah noted, 'We're 20. Probably compared to some 14-year-olds now, they know more than us'. John (aged 20) was of the opinion that teenagers' engagement in sexual activities and promiscuous behaviour is a bigger issue now than it was when he was younger. He reckoned that the number of teenagers getting pregnant at younger ages has significantly increased in recent years. Although this perception is actually incorrect, it highlights how even a slightly older generational cohort can perceive their slightly younger counterparts as much more licentious in comparison to them.

7.8   Participants' opinions on how to address the issues

Parental responsibility, education and regulation

In response to questions about regulation and whether they saw it as being effectively enforced, participants expressed mixed views. In terms of online security and the increasing

availability and accessibility to pornography and graphic content, one of the participants, Sarah (aged 20), commented, 'I thought a lot of those [sites] were banned, to be honest. I think it's up to parents to lock things on the computer'. Alice (aged 20), in the same focus group, agreed with this view, adding that parents should block certain programmes on their TVs from children and young people. However, after further discussion on this topic, the participants acknowledged the complexity of the issue and how modern advances in technology have made it increasingly difficult for parents to regulate what their children are accessing. Fiona (aged 20), however, was sceptical about the effectiveness of imposing new regulations for online activity, stating 'I don't know. Is it gone too far to haul it back now?'

One possible solution to overcoming some problems Sarah (aged 20) suggested is for parents and children to have more of an open relationship in which issues are discussed – a relationship where children are educated rather than regulated. Expressing similar sentiments, Daisy (aged 21) commented, 'I don't think the Government should be controlling everyone. I think they should be educating. I think it should be education, not control'. She argued that exercising too much control over children and young people will cause them to rebel and adopt a defiant attitude; education is a better alternative. A widespread view among the participants was that there is 'too much Government regulation in this country'. June (aged 21) argued that introducing regulation does not decrease the demand for sexualised goods or consumer goods – only education will. She stated that regulation is 'not really changing anything. It's just like harder to do [things], but they still do it … they're still going to want to'.

Education on media literacy and relationships/sex in schools

When discussing the topic of Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) classes in schools, the majority of participants were of the opinion that this allocated time was not being used in an effective way. Rather than educating students mainly on politics and the government, they suggested that schools use this time to address issues and problems pertinent to the students' lives and the current situations or pressures they are dealing with. Fiona (aged 20) also raised the point that teachers who teach these subjects should be given further training or take time to reflect on how best they as teachers can educate their students on these issues. She felt that some teachers may feel awkward teaching these subjects because they might feel 'it's the parents' work'.

A common view among participants was that children and young people should receive more education in school about online security, the consumption of alcohol and drugs, the risks associated with social networking sites and pornography. Daisy (aged 21) claimed 'Boys are going to watch porn. It's what's going to happen', so instead of regulating it and enforcing a ban, consequently making it a private issue, she reckoned boys should be taught about it in schools in an open discussion. In terms of education about relationships, sexuality and media literacy in schools, Gary (aged 20) proposed that these issues should be first introduced in primary school and built up from there. Maeve (aged 19), in the same focus group, suggested that first to third years in secondary school were the optimum times to educate students about relationships and sexuality; any earlier than that, she argued, students would not take it seriously and would laugh about it. Reflecting back on their own experiences, Ann (aged 20) and Daisy (aged 21) commented that they thought younger people or someone from outside the school should also teach these subjects, since students may relate to and listen more to them than to older teachers. Daisy noted young people's discomfort with intergenerational conversations on the subject of sexuality and observed that 'when it's an older person, when you're like that age, you're like "Oh, God" '.

7.9   Findings of interviews with key stakeholders

Interviews were conducted for this study with four stakeholders. They were selected on the basis that they contributed to public discourse on the issues of commercialisation and sexualisation, and/or have experience of working in social settings on child safety

and protection issues. The stakeholder sample is limited and should not be viewed as representative of a broader stakeholder constituency. The stakeholders involved were:

› **Fiachra Ó Súilleabháin**, Social Worker and Family Centre Acting Manager, Tusla – Child and Family Agency. Tusla was established in January 2014 as the State agency responsible for child protection and for improving the well-being and outcomes for children in Irish society;

› **Majella Ryan**, Acting National Clinical Director of the CARI Foundation, which is a voluntary organisation providing child-centred and specialised therapy and support to children, families and groups affected by child sexual abuse;

› **Maureen Griffin**, Forensic Psychologist and Director of Internet Safety for Schools Ireland. This organisation was established by Maureen Griffin to respond to a growing demand from schools for educational talks on Internet and mobile technology safety across the school system;

› **Stephen Lynam**, Director of Retail Ireland at IBEC, with responsibility for the *Childrenswear Guidelines*.

Findings are presented under the themes of sexualisation; the Internet – opportunities and harms; online pornography/sexually explicit material; conversations with children about sexuality, education and regulation; and sexualisation – *Childrenswear Guidelines*.

Sexualisation

Fiachra held the view that an intensification of certain aspects of sexualisation is evident in Irish society in recent years:

> 'I think we came from a time when sex was nowhere … I feel that the pendulum has slightly swung – where sex is everywhere now … certainly in advertising, it's very sexualised.'

However, he also pointed out that it is not a new phenomenon and certainly not in advertising, where it has been a longstanding feature:

> 'I found ads from the 1940s showing men the dangers of disease that you can get from "loose women" and the ads were … kind of 1950s pin-up ads … Roger Rabbit … and Mrs Rabbit was sexualised, you know. So it's always been there … it's certainly used as a commodity within advertising, probably more and more.'

Majella made connections between increased sexualised behaviour among young people as evidenced by helpline calls by parents to the CARI organisation, which she perceived bore some relation to children's increased access to online pornography:

> 'We've seen an increase in children acting out sexually on each other and exhibiting sexually harmful behaviour towards each other, and some of this, it would appear, is related to the access of pornography … It's so easily accessed now.'

She believed that the surge in sexual violence among young people, suggested in CARI's figures between 2011 and 2012, bore a relation to the use of online pornography:

> 'In 2012, we noticed a massive increase in … violent, sexual assaults that were more group or gang rape, and where the nature of the assaults was extremely violent, degrading, extremely traumatic … it would appear that a lot of younger people are gaining their sexual knowledge via porn sites and that's not teaching them anything really about healthy sex, you know, or intimacy … what they're learning about is much more perverted.'

When asked if there was a plausible explanation as to why there was such a significant rise in reports of aggravated sexual assaults to the CARI organisation during this particular time period, Majella confirmed that it was a rise that she 'couldn't quite account for'. Coupled with this rise in sexual assaults, she also noted other kinds of sexually abusive or bullying behaviour perpetrated by young people online (e.g. girls feeling pressured to share intimate photos, such as nude selfies, which were then posted online) and online 'slut shaming' activity,

which also concerned the CARI organisation and led it to publicly highlight concerns about the sexualisation of children as a possible factor in explaining this sudden increase in sexual assaults. However, it is important to point out that links made in the public discourse between sexualised behaviour, access to pornography and sexual offending, which can often generate anxiety, were made without any definitive data or findings demonstrating a relationship between these separate phenomena or trends.

When asked to describe the kind of sexualised behaviours that children would exhibit which would concern their parents or others (who would contact the CARI organisation's helpline and thus contribute to the statistics on 'sexualised behaviour' in the organisation's annual report), Majella identified the following:

> '…kids as young as eight and ten… describing oral sex, describing sometimes penetration, anal penetration or attempts at penetration, maybe unsuccessful, inserting objects. If it's a worry, you are looking at either an age gap or you're looking at one particular stronger character leading it and a degree of distress to the other. So certainly there's often one ringleader. There's often an age gap or an age difference or a functioning difference. So it might be one child with a learning disability, for example, and one not.'

Majella made a distinction between these behaviours and what she described as 'a natural exploration that can occur among peers … you know, "I'll show you mine if you show me yours" and sort of looking at each other's genitals and checking each other out. And then if they get a bit older, sort of in the teens … there may be some sexual experimentation'.

She commented on the confusion, hurt and upset that a child's sexualised behaviour can cause for a parent and a family:

> 'If you're a parent and you discover your child has acted out sexually on another child, that is dreadfully difficult for the parent … huge shame attached, but huge concern. Does this mean my child is a paedophile or deviant … it doesn't necessarily at all, but that's a huge piece [issue] for parents … It's made much worse if the child has acted out on another family member, so if they're both part of the same family, that's really shocking for parents.'

However, Majella agreed that there is the potential in the sexualisation discourse and its associated 'keep safe' messages directed at girls to not dress or appear sexualised, and that if they do (dress or appear sexualised) and they are attacked, then they can expect to consider themselves responsible:

> 'The message we are actually giving out [is that] what she wears is going to invite … an attack. But that's simply not true either … As women, I think we need to be saying that loud and clear – what you wear doesn't give anyone the right to sexually abuse you or rape you.'

She also thought this was particularly problematic in a cultural climate where there is still much confusion and misconception about sexual consent issues.

The Internet – opportunities and harms

Fiachra highlighted the many positive opportunities that the Internet provides for children in terms of forming friendships and reducing their social isolation, accessing sex education resources or support to help them work out sexual identity issues. He also noted the risks (some of which he sees in his own work in the field of child protection) related to increased opportunities for sexual grooming by older, more experienced adults; the possibilities for uploading material that damages oneself or others; and people putting themselves in the way of sexual exploitation by others. However, he also identified the need to keep in mind the main source of sexual harm to children, which, as he pointed out – and supported by evidence in the literature (*see, for example*, Finkelhor, 2009; Clapton and Cree, 2013) – is not Internet-based:

> 'We kind of buy into the myth of stranger danger … the reality is that most young people and children who are sexually abused are abused by somebody who's known to them.'

He acknowledged the challenges that he thought were difficult for parents and child welfare practitioners in terms of coping with a new medium of communication that is changing so rapidly. However, he thought that 'it's very hard to regulate the Internet. It's very hard to regulate a World Wide Web'. He reckoned that to deny or regulate young people access was unlikely to yield the best results:

> 'I think it's a difficult issue for parents to keep on top of. And for practitioners, certainly the social workers that I interviewed felt that "the horse had bolted" and it's very difficult. Young people are more au fait with IT issues than adults, so it's like playing catch-up almost, to try to prevent access, and it doesn't always work.'

He suggested that the best that can be done is to support parents to lessen the risks involved and to keep an open line of communication so that children can share their concerns.

Maureen drew attention to what she perceived to be parents' legitimate concerns about children's use of the Internet:

> 'Children are accessing material that they should not be accessing or that's age-inappropriate. Children are lying about their ages online. Children are using sites before they're age-appropriate to use that site. They are making friends online with people that they do not know in real life and parents often feel ill-equipped to deal with that.'

However, she also felt that it was important for parents from the start to set the rules that work for them on the use of technology in the home, so that children from a young age come to easily accept existing and new rules in this regard. She pointed out that what often happens is that rules are introduced too late; that parents allow children to set up a Facebook account or get a mobile phone because they have turned a certain age and not because they have been prepared for it, with the rules considered and worked out by the parents.

Online pornography/sexually explicit material

Majella's perspective was that pornography served no socially useful function and that she would welcome a block on pornography sites or some kind of filtering system so that pornography would be much less accessible, particularly to children and young people. She viewed pornography as always exploitative and degrading to those participating. Young people, she argued, on the basis of access to pornography broaden their repertoire of normal sexual behaviours to include that which is deviant, with implications for themselves and others. She also thought that it was the easy access to pornography for children now which was particularly worrying, compared to the past. She stated:

> 'You see, before there wouldn't be such easy access and maybe the only thing they'd access was a dirty magazine … a porn magazine. Whereas now … a click of a few buttons and they're right in there to all sorts of things.'

She also identified what she thought were particular risks associated with some young people accessing pornographic material at a time when they are in the process of developing their sense of who they are as sexual beings.

Furthermore, Majella and Fiachra would both be concerned if the only sex education young people accessed was that provided by online pornography. Majella related a story to illustrate how in her view the pornographic material children access can have traumatic effects on them and can force parents to have conversations with children that they feel they should not have to have with those so young:

'I had a mother here just the other day talking about what her child had accessed … A friend had told him [her son] to go on this site and he was actually traumatised by what he saw … he had snuck onto the computer when they [parents] weren't watching and because he was quite well monitored, had waited for his opportunity to check this out. But actually it had a huge impact and now he's really struggling with what is okay, what isn't okay and what's appropriate and he's still quite young, you know. So the talks that have to happen are far more advanced than his parents would hope to have at this stage.'

Majella's comment reflected the discomfort felt by parents when they perceive themselves to be intruding on the innocence of childhood because of what their children have accessed.

Conversations with children about sexuality, education and regulation

Fiachra criticised what he thought was a tendency in Ireland for every person or agency to expect another to engage children and young people in conversations about their sexualities, with the danger that these conversations are never held or not held often enough. He noted that it is most often highlighted in relation to parents and schools, but it also happens in other contexts:

'Social workers depend on other people (such as foster carers or residential workers or youth health services) to provide sexual education rather than conversing with the young person that they're responsible for about their sexual behaviour, asking them about their sexual identity, discussing it.'

He highlighted the need to take our conversations with young people to 'uncomfortable' places, even if it causes discomfort or embarrassment for all concerned, because as he put it 'our services need to respond to the realities of young people's lives'. He thought that LGBT young people particularly miss out on comprehensive and useful sex education:

'One of the arguments I would make is – whatever chance you have if you're a straight young person to get it [sex education], gay people, lesbian people, transgender people, bisexual people, those discussions are not taking place – how to have sex and safely – for those young people. It is not a part of the education system.'

Majella shared a similar opinion – that Irish sex education could be more robust and connect more with young people's day-to-day sexual lives. She also emphasised that sex education could be stronger if it included an element of training young people in resilience, so that they learn skills to enable them to adapt and cope well with stressful or difficult events in their lives. Fiachra also identified very practical and positive measures that could be taken to support young people's safe sexual decision-making, such as reducing the VAT on condoms and publicising their increased affordability. He observed that if the legal age of sexual consent stays at 17 and is not reduced, there may be negative implications for the significant number of young people who engage in consensual sexual relations, possibly a year or two before the legal age.

Maureen also highlighted the value of conversing regularly with children about their Internet use, in order to prevent some parents from worrying needlessly and to ensure that children know from a young age that they can talk about anything that might trouble them when online. She pointed out that many parents do introductory IT courses to enable their parenting, while others use their lack of knowledge of social networking to very effectively engage children in conversation and interaction:

'A lot of parents say to me the way they do it is they say, "Look I'm thinking of starting on Facebook. I'd like to make friends again with some of my friends from secondary school. I've lost contact with them. Can you show me how to do it?" And the child will happily sit down and show the parent how to set up their own account … The parent then knows the child's level of usage and what they are aware of, and it also opens up a discussion and involves something that they're doing together.'

Both Majella and Fiachra identified the need for regulation aimed at protection where it was feasible and practicable and likely to be effective. Otherwise, all three interviewees (Fiachra, Maureen and Majella) advocated a broad stakeholder approach to education, which included parents and schools, but which also capitalised on the opportunities offered by traditional as well as new media and other practitioners who work with children. However, they thought that in order to encourage an effective stakeholder approach, there needed to be an atmosphere in Irish society conducive to more openness and less fear about engaging young people in conversation about their sexualities and sexual conduct.

Maureen also pointed out that calls to ban sites are misplaced because:

'We need to look at the behaviour on the sites. What makes people feel that they can go on to sites that allow them to be anonymous, or … give them some cloak of anonymity, what lets them feel that they can act and behave in a way very different to the way they act or behave in real life. I think education is needed there, to try and break down the distance that technology creates and make them responsible for their behaviours online.'

She strongly argued that education is key to promoting Internet safety for children because:

'We can't block everything from our children … Yes, we need to take precautions and try and restrict, particularly for younger children, their access online. But I think it is about education.'

She particularly highlighted the opportunities afforded by the revised Junior Certificate programme to address some of the issues raised by IT usage:

'With the whole revised Junior Certificate programme, there is scope there for modules … I know that there are two specific modules – one in relation to technology and social media, and one in relation to relationships and sexual development – where they could bring in an awful lot more of the new pressures that children are now facing with social media.'

Sexualisation – *Childrenswear Guidelines*

As discussed in detail in Chapter 3, the *Retail Ireland Childrenswear Guidelines* (applying to children under 12 years) were introduced for the first time in Ireland in 2012, following an invitation by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. These were aimed at ensuring that clothing design and marketing of clothing does not unduly gender-stereotype or sexualise children, and were closely aligned with the *British Retail Consortium Guidelines*.

Stephen Lynam of Retail Ireland claimed that the Childrenswear Guidelines have been effective. He stated, 'The fact that we haven't heard much in the media is actually I think testament to the success of the guidelines'. He noted that much of the work was going on behind the scenes 'so we think the approach is to concentrate internally, with bursts of activity interspersed within that, and then keeping the Department [i.e. Department of Children and Youth Affairs] fully informed throughout'.

Part of this involved ensuring that retail buyers are aware of the guidelines:

'The approach we have always taken is that the most important group that need to be aware of the guidelines are the buyers for the retail outlets, because once they are completely aware, and once retailers themselves have properly educated their buyers about the guidelines, that is where it is ensured that something that is not age-appropriate does not make it onto the shop floor in the first place.'

Stephen also stated that there were ongoing efforts to access more signatories to the guidelines and progress was being made in this regard. Heatons had since become a signatory and though Dunnes was not a signatory, it was adhering to the guidelines. He claimed that this was not an ideal situation and more effort would be put into encouraging Dunnes to become

a signatory. Negotiations, he stated, were also underway with the Northern Ireland Retail Consortium towards an all-Ireland code of practice governing children's clothing retailing. When asked if he thought public awareness of the guidelines was very limited, he stated that:

> 'The guidelines would be referred to in the media … I think every two to three months they reference them at some point. We have actually noticed a reduction in the number of media reports about inappropriate clothing in the last few years and that, I hope, is a result of the publication of the guidelines.'

He suggested that less media attention and the success of the guidelines to date might best explain parents' lack of awareness of them. He also stated that further publicity was planned to launch the all-Ireland set of children's wear guidelines, which would again remind parents of their existence. When asked if Retail Ireland had received any complaints from parents about stores not complying with the guidelines, he replied:

> 'Within the first six months, we had a few complaints. There were also issues raised by children's rights representatives or from parents' groups, and we would have dealt with them in conjunction with the store in question. But none have arrived since then.'

The lack of complaints was taken as evidence by Retail Ireland that the guidelines were effective and that the necessary changes in retail practice were happening at store level. Stephen stated that the change was evident:

> 'Compared to 10 years ago, there would have been issues around, say, T-shirts with slogans and the heel pitch on shoes and so on. So those products have come off the market. But what we were ensuring when we put in these guidelines was that existing best practice was notified and maintained.'

When asked why parents might not complain about products for children that they found objectionable, he identified that it may be a particularly Irish cultural characteristic not to complain. But he pointed out that retailers wish to know if consumers are not satisfied:

> 'Retailers actually care 100% what they think, because retail, they don't get any subsidies … they don't get paid to operate. In fact, they pay to operate through their taxes. So they're absolutely 100% reliant upon people saying those things, and I think every major store in this country has some sort of feedback mechanism. If you don't want to say it [complain] to a person, if you're embarrassed or shy or whatever, there are other ways to do it – through websites and so on … as a consumer, I wouldn't feel shy about telling them that, but I can see….'

He also argued that the Childrenswear Guidelines indicated that retailers were prepared to take responsibility, but that it was not retailers' responsibility alone and that very often clothing and other products on shop floors are there because there is demand from consumers due to other factors, including advertising and the influence of celebrities:

> 'Retailers respond to demand. They don't really shape it. And just as with clothing and with food and all the rest of it, these brands advertise significantly … to my earlier point, retailers have to sell what people want and normally they go into a shop when they desire to buy something and they buy it. Similarly, you know, say in terms of clothing, the demand for that is made not only by the brand, but also by celebrities wearing the clothes … so while we accept our responsibilities, it's not primarily the retailer that drives demand.'

Ultimately, he argued that parents need to take responsibility:

> 'It was also a matter of personal responsibility, like parents really have the final say here … Parents, I don't believe, go into a retail outlet with a complete open mind about what they want to buy. Their children and they would have formed opinions and desires for certain toys or certain clothes or whatever, way before they go in, so the retailer there can't control that necessarily.'

He also argued that store layout is designed to facilitate consumers, so clothing and toys are presented in stores according to gender and age range criteria to make the task of shopping easier.

It was evident in the interview that the key focus of Retail Ireland is on making the existing guidelines work, rather than on any further extension of the guidelines to cover more dimensions of children's retail, as has been proposed in the UK.

7.10 Summary

When asked what advice they would pass on to younger generations, one of the research participants in the young adults' focus groups said 'Don't grow up too fast'. This was despite much of the focus group data indicating the ways in which the participants, as children and young people, had also sought to grow up quickly.

There was a general consensus among the young adults in the four focus groups that they mainly conceived of commercialisation and sexualisation in negative rather than in positive terms and this was in keeping with much of the public discourse on these issues. They also saw commercialisation and sexualisation as threatening the special status of childhood, which they thought had gone into decline since they were children in the 1990s.

The young adults interviewed were generally of the view that the risks now pertaining to commercialisation and sexualisation were more significant than they had been when they were young. These risks were mainly attributed to their radically different online worlds and the rapid growth and diversification of social media in a short period. However, it is important to note that a generational gap was evident in terms of how these young adults tended to emphasise the differences rather than the similarities between growing up now and growing up just a decade ago. They constructed themselves as adults, capable of navigating the commercial and sexual worlds relatively successfully in contrast to their younger counterparts, whom they perceived to be permanently at risk and considerably influenced by manipulative marketing strategies and peer pressure. They made some incorrect assumptions about younger people and rarely did they perceive children and young people as having any agency or control over any dimension of their lives. Yet, their own practices of consumption, both as children and young adults, revealed that they too had made choices, negotiated and compromised with their parents, exercised discernment and engaged in processes to enable them to identify with some peers and to differentiate themselves from others. Sexualised clothing was only viewed very negatively by the young adults when very young children were the wearers and in this context parents/guardians were predominantly blamed. Yet, their own self-sexualisation practices, which generated for them very contradictory feelings and experiences, were perceived much less problematically.

Much of what the young adults reported was very similar to that reported by parents and discussed in detail in Chapter 6 – covering topics such as the receipt of pocket money, expectations to save, money management practices, sibling relations and negotiations within families, as well as their perceptions of the influence of urban living on consumption. The young adults demonstrated different levels of interest and engagement with designer brands, with some claiming that this interest had declined with age or with their 'poor' student status, which limited choice. However, the ways in which brands serve as signifiers of social class, social status and peer group attachment among young people was evident. Almost all identified the mobile phone as a hugely important part of their lives, and mentioned the significance of its utility as a product. Most acknowledged that their desire for the premium product in mobile phone technology was very strong.

Young female adults frequently identified 14 as the age when they first entered into a more (hetero)sexualised peer culture, taking an interest in dress, make-up and clothing that was bound up with peer influence or identification and a desire for positive attention and affirmation. The participants in general demonstrated very limited awareness of regulatory measures designed to protect children, and apart from a few suggestions about parents regulating Internet access, they put greater emphasis on better education for children and adults alike, sharing their ideas on the problems and possibilities in this regard.

One stakeholder interview provided insight into the progress of the children's wear guidelines, designed to limit the availability of what has been defined as 'sexualised' clothing for children under 12 years of age in certain retail outlets. The other stakeholder interviews revolved around issues or trends in commercialisation and sexualisation, which those interviewed thought were concerning, particularly as they are experienced by vulnerable children. They advocated stronger societal responses, sometimes in the form of regulation but more often in the form of education. The view evident was that a lack of effective education is probably related to our failings as adults more generally to have open and more uncomfortable conversations with children and young people about their sexual lives. This view merits attention and is picked up in Chapter 8 on 'Discussion, findings and recommendations'.

8. Discussion, findings and recommendations

This was an exploratory study. The findings are diverse and they connect to a range of existing legislative, policy and practice areas. With this in mind, the Research Team has made recommendations, taking cognisance of related research underway by other agencies, of reviews conducted by authorities, or of existing arrangements in the fields of regulation or education, which could be bolstered or cross-referenced with the findings of this report. We are conscious that we are drawing findings and making recommendations in a context where the research terrain is particularly complex and contested, as noted in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2; where there are tensions between study findings and also tensions in the data we gathered on children and young people's capacities and their rights in relation to participation, communication and protection; and, finally, where too much targeting of individual parents, children and young people for intervention can be critiqued for neglecting the bigger political project of changing oppressive features of the society in which we all live (Gill, 2012).

First, we will revisit the key research questions asked in this study and then present the findings and recommendations under the following headings: Parents and carers; Commercialisation; Sexualisation; Data protection; Education; Consumer education and critical media literacy; Regulation; and Research.

8.1   Research questions revisited

1. What is meant by the commercialisation and sexualisation of children in Irish society?

When commercialisation and sexualisation of children is discussed, different and competing concepts of these phenomena and of children are produced. Because the concepts are more negatively (rather than positively) employed, they tend most often to be constructed as 'problems' impacting on children – and girls in particular – that need to be addressed. That these phenomena do have positive and life-enhancing impacts on children's lives receives some (but much less) attention in the literature, research and popular discourse. When terms like 'commercialisation' and 'sexualisation' are used, questions about their elasticity and their usefulness have been raised by many (Aldbury and Lumby, 2010; Bragg *et al*, 2011; Buckingham, 2011; Egan, 2013; Renold, 2013) and a reframing of the concepts has been advocated – towards focusing instead on 'sexism' (Gill, 2012; Williams, 2013) and 'consumption' (Buckingham, 2011).

Commercialisation and sexualisation, when discussed, also give rise to different and competing concepts of children and young people in terms of their capacities, rights, needs and welfare. Perceptions of children as 'innocent' or as 'victims' are commonplace and those children or young people perceived to lack the innocence of childhood are conceptualised as both 'risky' and 'at risk'. Much attention has been given in the literature to exploring the impact of protectionist discourses, which emanate from contemporary constructions of children as innocent. Some (Egan and Hawkes, 2008a and 2008b; Egan, 2011; Robinson, 2011; Markovic, 2012) have argued for a reframing of these discourses away from innocence and protectionism where children are concerned and towards greater recognition of children's sexual citizenship (Egan, 2011). According to Egan (2011), thinking critically about our visceral reactions to sexualisation as parents and adults is an important step towards granting sexual citizenship to children and young people.

2. Has the commercialisation and sexualisation of children changed or intensified in recent years in Irish society, and if so, how is this manifest and in what sites?

The commercialisation and sexualisation of children are not new phenomena, as evidenced in this study. That we live in a more commercial and sex-saturated societal culture in recent years is not disputed either in the literature or in the research findings. In an advanced capitalist

society, increasingly more of the formal and informal spaces and places that children inhabit are influenced by commercial values and practices. The intensification of the sexual in different aspects of contemporary culture is evident and perceived in diverse ways – something to be celebrated as democratising, even though market-driven (e.g. McNair, 2002) or something to be challenged for its exploitative potential (e.g. Rush and La Nauze, 2006). New media in particular (but traditional also) are viewed by parents as key sites of commercialisation and sexualisation. Their perceptions are that children are more directly targeted for commercial activities and sexually explicit material in more spaces and in a range of new and more sophisticated ways, some of which they believe to be particularly influential, persuasive and deceptive.

3. What gendered and other key meanings are transmitted about and to children growing up in an Irish commercialised and sexualised culture?

The sexualisation discourse is strongly gendered, and this was evident in the interview data collected in this study. It is girls who are defined as particularly in need of protection from sexual influences in the world around them. 'Sexualised' or 'knowing' girls are perceived as a problem, both for themselves and for other girls and boys. Easier access to pornography – whether it be accidental, deliberate or habitual – is how 'sexualisation' is mainly viewed as impacting on boys and, indeed, with implications for girls. The connections made between girls' sexualised dress and practice, as evidenced in this study, at times almost rendered sexual assault of girls justifiable or understandable. There is a need to consider the implications of this in terms of making girls responsible for their own safety and thus obscuring a discourse that could promote a better understanding and acceptance of sexual consent and greater clarity on the reasons for sexual violence in our society.

4. What are the effects of the sexualisation and commercialisation of children as revealed in the literature and as perceived by parents?

A number of reports have drawn attention to the negative 'effects' of sexualisation and commercialisation on children. It is important to note the tendency of some research to present correlations or associations between variables in a 'cause and effect' manner and to highlight a lack of knowledge as to the directions of the correlations found in the 'effects' studies, many of which are based on samples of young adults rather than children. These studies are also not designed to take account of the range of influences in children's lives and how they interact together to demonstrate definitively the much greater impact of particular external commercial and sexual influences. The positive impact of such influences also tends not to be a focus of 'effects' studies, although they have been identified in qualitative research projects conducted within cultural studies. That greater dialogue should occur across these disciplinary boundaries in particular has been noted (Gill, 2012). The precautionary principle – that sexualisation and commercialisation may be causing undue harm to children's well-being – is sometimes seen as sufficient justification by activists and campaigners for the extension of specific policy interventions, or regulation, in these fields.

5. What do existing data sources tell us about the experiences, understandings, values and practices of young people in Ireland in terms of how they relate to various dimensions of a commercialised and sexualised popular culture?

Some brief insights were obtained in this research into children and young people's cultural and consumer practices (*see Chapter 3*), and as a result of this project we have an insight into how parents *think* children relate to these phenomena. However, we still need to better

171

understand children and young people's views and experiences in their sexual and commercial contexts, in as much of their complexity as is possible and from multiple social positions such as social class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability and gender (Horvath *et al*, 2013). We need more insight in an Irish context into the *'ways of being and ways of seeing'* (Thompson and Donaghue, 2014, p. 26) that children and young people feel are made available to them in sexual and commercial cultural contexts, and to what extent these reproduce or challenge existing sexual and commercial relations. Otherwise, our interventions will be informed by 'adultist' and possibly incorrect assumptions as to what children and young people require in helping them to navigate their social and cultural worlds.

6. What are parents' concerns for their children as they relate to this culture? What strategies do they employ to address these concerns; what are their perspectives on their success or otherwise in this regard and what do they believe would support their efforts in this area?

Parents articulated a number of concerns for their children, which varied depending on the ages of children, their personalities and their gender. Parents did not wish to deflect what they perceived to be their responsibilities onto other stakeholders, but they did seek support from other stakeholders to support their efforts as parents where possible, recognising that this may not be easy. Indeed, the question posed by Staksrud (2013, p. 162) in relation to 'who children should trust in the online world' could also be applied to 'who children should trust in the sexual and commercial worlds'. She questioned whether it should be any of the following constituencies, from whom there is no lack of privatised advice:

> 'Industry with its underlying market motives; NGOs with their underlying ideological/ religious/funding and legitimacy motives; Government institutions with their underlying political and bureaucratic motives; researchers and experts with their underlying theoretical approach and funding-driven agenda; partners, peers or parents; or mix and match?'

In seeking to protect their children from what they considered harmful sexual or commercial influences, parents sometimes struggled in relation to knowing how best to do this. They thought that the avoidance of conversation or explanation potentially maintained children's innocence, but they also thought that the provision of information and skills, which they believed compromised innocence, did offer children opportunity for protection and the development of their resilience. Similarly, some of the parents who monitored their older children's online conduct, with or without their knowledge, felt conflicted. As more democratic family relationships are increasingly the norm, the data gathered from the majority of parents indicated a preparedness on their part to negotiate with their children, to compromise, to afford children the opportunity to feed into decision-making, and to utilise strategies which they (parents) thought were best suited to the personalities of their children and to achieving results. One of these strategies involved parents using older siblings to exercise their influence or to guide, monitor and support younger siblings. Parents came up with ideas for extending regulation, but they favoured education as the main approach to addressing their concerns. With this in mind and relative to the review of other countries' contexts (*see Chapter 5*), bolstering existing education inputs relevant to the issues and developing critical media literacy education in formal and informal settings could be given greater attention within the Irish context.

7. What regulatory frameworks nationally and internationally have been developed and what are they seeking to achieve? How are children's rights conceptualised in such frameworks and what can we learn about these frameworks based on evaluative analyses and critical commentaries as to their effectiveness or otherwise?

Regulatory interventions coupled with educational initiatives are the key policy approaches taken in every context examined in this study to address the issues raised by commercialisation and sexualisation where children are concerned. The logic and character of regulation and policy activity is very much informed by a country's own specific historical, social and cultural characteristics, as well as dominant constructions of childhood, as, for example, childhood 'in crisis', 'being robbed' or in 'social decline' (Kehily, 2010; Buckingham, 2011) . In some countries selected for review, studies similar to this one, which have predominantly gathered diverse kinds of evidence and only focused on negative effects of these phenomena on children's lives, have stimulated intense intervention in the regulatory, policy and educational spheres (as in the UK and Australia). Increasingly, it is noted that in a globalised capitalist world, the European Commission and key agencies internationally are setting universal standards for application at national level. The evidence on the success of some extended forms of regulation where children are concerned is contested. In this context, Buckingham *et al* (2009) argued for rigorous cost-benefit analyses prior to extending any kind of regulation, and for governments to take a more active role in stimulating alternatives to market provision, rather than entirely focusing their efforts on denying children access.

8. What innovative research methodologies have been used in other contexts to study children and young people's consumption and their cultural worlds?

Research on aspects of commercialisation and sexualisation with significant child or youth participation is relatively limited. Many qualitative research studies rely on traditional research methods such as interviewing and focus group research, but there are also studies that, in addition to or in place of these methods, have utilised other interesting methods or techniques to elicit children's information and experience. Cyberspace ethnographies, as elaborated by Griffiths and Casswell (2010), involve researchers collecting fans' comments about different media or forms of popular culture posted on websites, chatrooms, etc. The comments are treated as ethnographic data and subjected to textual analysis. Considered to raise important ethical issues, it is argued that information on the Internet is already in the public domain and studies using this methodology also employ safeguards for participants to ensure that their identities are not disclosed.

Identity boxes or Lego modelling are used as both research and pedagogical tools. They involve young people gathering materials or objects to put in shoe boxes, etc. or making models of their identities in Lego to represent who they think they are and their experiences at that stage of their lives, as well as how others might see them (Gauntlett, 2007). Consumer desire has been accessed using methods such as collage-making, drawing and story-writing. In a study of children's consumption by Pole *et al* (2005), in addition to focus group discussions, parents also completed clothing diaries, and a number of families were visited five times over the course of a full calendar year to track their fashion consumption. Activities undertaken with the children included semi-structured interviews; fashion 'likes' and 'dislikes'; projects in which they had the opportunity to write, draw and insert pictures; a photographic project where children were given a disposable camera to record images of clothes; and accompanied family shopping trips. The latter trips provide a means of exploring intergenerational dynamics relating to consumption as well as insights into consumption behaviours and decision-making in families. Behaviours not always articulated (or possibly not noticed by participants themselves) may be captured using this approach. These trips tend to involve passive observation and subsequent interviewing.

Willett (2008) studied girls' uses of online doll-maker sites as a way of generating insights into the girls' perceptions of body image and issues pertaining to sexual politics more generally. Ringrose (2010) conducted research with young social networkers, which involved interviewing them as well as observing their Bebo sites over time. Elm (2009) conducted extensive research into girls' sexualised presentations of self on websites. Ringrose *et al* (2012), in a qualitative study of children, young people and sexting, mapped young people's activity on the social networking site Facebook, in addition to interviews and focus group discussions.

Mapping can be used to good effect, as illustrated in the mapping exercise by the National Youth Council of Ireland to explore young people's exposure to alcohol advertising and marketing (NYCI, 2009). This involved young people logging the details and providing examples of the advertising they encountered in their day-to-day lives. In their study of sexualised goods marketed to children, Buckingham *et al* (2010) engaged children in a number of activities, such as designing a doll to compete in the market with Barbie or Bratz dolls, designing a line of clothing for 10-15 year-olds, a cosmetic product for teenagers and an advertisement to promote a brand; participants were also asked to plan a shopping basket for a 10-year-old. Many of the activities took place in media or English lessons in school. Renold's (2013) very significant qualitative study of 125 children (aged 10-12 years) in Wales and their sexual cultures was designed to inform the National Assembly for Wales Cross-Party Group on Children, Sexualities, 'Sexualisation' and Equalities. The study employed participatory group activities with the children, followed by optional unstructured child-led interviews with individuals, pairs or groups. The data gleaned from the young adults in the present study indicate that mapping children's entry into, and early experiences of, sexual culture – taking note of the positives they experience as well as the challenges, their resilience or lack of – may be beneficial for the purpose of enhancing educational inputs and supports for children.

8.2   Key findings and recommendations

The remainder of this chapter explores the study's key findings, and recommendations are outlined.

8.2.1   Parents and carers

Key findings

> Parents generally accepted that aspects of the commercial and sexual worlds had intensified in recent years, but in discussion they also acknowledged that concerns about commercialisation and sexualisation were not new, particularly when they recalled their own experiences of growing up.
> Parents have different values and levels of resources, and they confront different kinds of tensions and challenges where issues pertaining to sexualisation and commercialisation of their children are concerned. For this reason, they also held very diverse views and ideas as to what needs to be addressed and in what ways.
> Parents viewed commercialisation as a pervasive feature of advanced capitalist societies, and aspects of the commercial world that were related to children concerned parents. But these aspects varied depending on the parents' own views and experiences relating to the desirability of commercialism, advances in technologies, their values and aspirations for their children, as well the age, gender and perceived personalities of their children.
> Parents articulated more concerns about sexualisation of children. But it is important to note that many of these concerns were rooted in *assumptions* of children's social and sexual worlds, often influenced by media reports, popular sexualisation discourses in circulation, anecdotal evidence or social trends they found concerning, and to a much lesser extent on *actual* negative experiences with their own children.
> When parents discussed their children's engagement in the commercial world, they at times referred to their own experience as parents or to wider family values pertaining to consumption, revealing interesting insights into how these can be considerably

interconnected, highly ambivalent and contradictory. For example, some parents who liked to buy designer brands, as well as those who rejected aspects of consumption, spoke about how they perceived their choices to influence their children positively and negatively, or to impact on them.

› Parents predominantly viewed sexualisation as a girls' issue and discussed it in the context of girls'/daughters' attitudes, dress, behaviour and demeanour. Pornography as a manifestation of a more sexualised society was constructed as an issue that involved boys as the main actors, but with implications for girls in a sexist society.

› Parents did not always consider sexualisation a problem, but when they did, it related significantly to their concerns about the transgression of particular boundaries (such as child/adult worlds or male/female worlds) and to attendant dangers that they perceived to be associated with this.

› Parents interviewed were predominantly very resourceful in addressing concerns about sexualisation or commercialisation with their children, in ways that took account of their children's stage of development, personality type, sensitivities, friendships and likely reactions.

› Parents did share accounts of supportive as well as unsupportive persons, agencies and actions in their immediate or wider social environments, which enabled or impeded their efforts to address what they perceived to be negative commercial or 'sexualising' influences in their children's lives.

› Older siblings were frequently encouraged and expected by parents to monitor younger children's activities, to guide them and to set norms of behaviour for them. Many parents utilised this approach, perceiving it to be a more effective strategy where younger children in the family were concerned.

› Few parents demonstrated a clear awareness of who best to raise their concerns with when worried about aspects relating to the commercialisation and sexualisation of children.

› Parents demonstrated a lack of awareness and information on the regulatory infrastructure in Ireland and on the codes of practice of regulatory bodies.

› Parents rarely made complaints, either informally or formally, on aspects of commercialisation and sexualisation they regarded as problematic for children. This was for a range of different reasons, including confusion or a lack of awareness about who to register the complaint with, a cultural reticence to be perceived as a person who complains, and views that the complaint would not result in the desired action being taken.

› In terms of responding to the concerns they raised, parents sought different strategies, sometimes in relation to the particular concerns they had about their children as boys or girls or at their particular stage of development (pre-schoolers or teenagers). They were unsure about what strategies were possible to implement successfully, but they frequently prioritised *education over regulation* as the overarching approach required.

› Interviews with parents reveal that they think they are predominantly responsible for their children in relation to protecting them and guiding them in a commercialised and sexualised society. However, most also highlighted the benefits of a strong stakeholder approach to support their efforts in this regard. Internet safety, and particularly in relation to Internet-enabled mobile devices, was viewed as a particularly onerous parental responsibility and one that parents frequently acknowledged required support and assistance from other stakeholders.

› Parents' unease in relation to talking to children about issues relating to sexualisation were more often raised by parents of younger children, who feared the impact of having such discussions.

› Parents pointed out that relationships between parents and children within families are more democratic and less authoritarian than in the past, but they also acknowledged the challenges posed for parents and families where issues about commercialisation and sexualisation are concerned. Blanket rules set by parents are fewer in number these days, particularly for older children, and more discussion, negotiation and compromise takes place between parents and their children around contentious issues. This was evident in reports about shopping for food with younger children and shopping for clothes with older children.

› Parents identified many 'teachable' moments when they sought to impart lessons informally about the commercial or sexual worlds to young children and teenagers, in order to help them better navigate these worlds safely and successfully. However, these moments were more likely when parents felt that they themselves had the requisite knowledge and skills, and when children were engaging in activities in the company of their parents or with their oversight (e.g. on a shopping trip or using the Internet under supervision).

› Children's access to, and use of, the Internet featured prominently in parents' concerns about the risks posed to children by different dimensions of commercialisation and sexualisation. Risks cited included access to material deemed age-inappropriate; access to pornography/sexually explicit material; access to new and deceptive/persuasive forms of advertising; conduct-related risks associated with children's Internet use or contact with predatory individuals.

› There were requests from parents for greater restrictions to block access by children to online pornography. They identified measures being tried and tested in other countries, such as opt-in facilities, restrictions on public Wi-Fi and filtering technologies. However, a smaller number of parents expressed concerns about the possible negative implications of more widespread use of filtering technologies and how this could represent a step too far by agents of the State or others into the lives of people in the name of 'child protection'.

› Many parents of younger children stated that they used parental control products and services or engaged in direct supervision of their children's computer use. In contrast, parents of older children reported that they tended to monitor, to a greater or lesser extent, their children's social networking and Internet use, in some instances with (and in others without) their children's knowledge. Other parents believed this monitoring to be inappropriate or unnecessary in a trusting relationship with older children. Clearly, other kinds of research would need to be undertaken to explore to what extent parents' reports of what they do are evidenced in practice and what are the implications for children's privacy.

Recommendations

1. Considering that parents' assumptions of children's social and sexual worlds are significantly influenced by media reporting, the media and key informants, 'experts' or 'moral entrepreneurs' need to be mindful of this and ensure that media messages pertaining to children and young people's social and sexual worlds are balanced or are informed by a strong evidence base (rather than anecdotal) and not likely to generate unnecessary panic among parents/guardians.

2. Because parents are mindful of their own responsibilities in relation to their children, but also recognise the burden and challenges in exercising these responsibilities, a wider stakeholder approach is needed at national level (State, industry leaders, regulatory authorities) and at local level (schools, family support and crisis services, retailers). Such an approach should focus directly on children's well-being and would ensure that parents feel supported in this regard.

3. Greater awareness is required on the resources available to parents to help them with parenting young children and teenagers. At times, parents merely want information in a quick and easy format regarding social networking sites or other websites their children wish to use. Such information could be best circulated by a key authority (e.g. Internet Safety Advisory Committee) through the network of schools in the country.

4. The introduction of a regulatory one-stop portal, like 'Parentport' in the UK, should be assessed in terms of its effectiveness and suitability in the Irish context for simplifying the regulatory infrastructure, for making it more complaints-friendly for parents and other stakeholders, and for providing education resources for use in different educational settings.

5. Proven rating/classification systems for films and video games, such as the Pan European Game Information (PEGI) system, should be strongly and frequently publicised so that parents are informed in their decision-making. Similarly, the age requirements for social networking sites should also be publicised.

6. All regulatory authorities should be encouraged to make their websites and resources more user-friendly for both parents and children, and they should be expected to use part of their resources to engage in regular public awareness activities directed at parents, children and other stakeholders.

7. Agencies working with vulnerable young people should be resourced by the State or by industry to engage in public awareness activities and programmes designed to support children and young people (and their families) who, because of their particular vulnerabilities, may deliberately or accidentally access media content, messages or images that cause them distress.

8. The findings of this research should inform policy and practice in such ongoing projects as the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme, which is currently funding a research project exploring how parents/carers are talking to their very young children about sex, relationships and gender issues.

9. The Research Team support recommendations pertaining to awareness and use of parental control products and services, the identification of certain public Wi-Fi access points utilised by children as family-friendly, made by the Internet Content Advisory Group (2014) and designed to assist parents to more effectively manage their children's Internet usage, so that children can avail of the positive opportunities on offer at the same time as being protected.

8.2.2   Commercialisation

Key findings

> The data from this study reveal that children are born into, grow and live in spaces mediated by capitalist market relations. For example, there is presently active in Ireland (as in other countries) a campaign for commercial-free education.

> The insights gleaned into children and young people's commercialisation in different contexts are presented in this study from the perspectives of parents and not children. Contradictory experiences of commercialisation, as well as competing values and ideas about good and bad forms of commercialisation, are evident.

> Parents' accounts of children's susceptibility and vulnerability to forces of commercialisation, and their efforts to protect them from forms they considered harmful or excessive, are also complicated by accounts of their own lived realities of commercialisation as children and adults, and the evidence that they are also involved in their children's consumption in ways that are deeply ambivalent and contradictory.

> 'Children' as a market in its own right has a long history, but this study draws attention to important shifts in intensity in the children's market with the increased operation of marketing across borders, the different definitions of the age of 'a child' in operation in different contexts, the emergence of digital technologies presenting a greater number of opportunities for marketers to reach children in different ways and the provision of more spaces, places, branded, tailored goods and services for children and families to consume.

> While much of the concern revolves around protecting children from what is perceived to be possibly excessive or harmful advertising and marketing material, the risk is that there is not so much attention given to ensuring that children can gain access to information or material that is good for them, or to ensuring that children's needs are not just met by the market, but are also met by others (national governments, local authorities and other public service providers).

Recommendations

1. The evidence suggests that blanket bans on advertising targeting children are less likely to be effective in the context of an increasingly global media and digital marketing environment.

2. Information needs to be obtained from children and young people on how they understand and relate to newer strategies used by marketers (particularly online advertising and branding strategies), in order to better inform any extension of regulation and provision of education.

3. Codes of practice governing traditional forms of advertising targeting children should be reviewed frequently and extended to cover newer forms of advertising directed at children.

4. Education relating to digital literacy should include components designed to demonstrate to children and young people the commercial workings of the Internet, particularly alerting them to Internet marketing strategies and their persuasive intentions.

5. In Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) lessons, students could be encouraged to undertake projects on consumer activism as a way of critically engaging them in thinking about issues and in the context of their own relationships to production and consumption.

6. There is an increasing need for key stakeholders to think about, discuss and debate the extent to which public services such as education, health and care could or should be (or should not be) insulated from commercialisation in the interests of children. The results of these deliberations could usefully inform policies, codes of practice and guidelines for public provision aimed at children.

8.2.3   Sexualisation

Key findings

› Parents generally considered commercialisation to be pervasive and problematic only at times. But sexualisation was their more pressing concern and they perceived it to be predominantly related to girls.

› However, the data gathered indicate that parents' concerns are often rooted in general sexualisation discourses, anecdote or social trends, and only in a small number of instances were grounded in their own experiences as parents of children.

› At times, they perceived sexualisation to be a predominantly new and very intense phenomenon of our era; at other times, when recalling their own experiences of 'sexualisation', their stories provided a corrective to its newness and its construction as a social problem.

› Sexualisation was perceived as more problematic than commercialisation, mainly because it was seen by parents as transgressing boundaries in terms of how adults/young males may see children/girls and because of the perceived attendant dangers associated with this.

› Connections made by parents and others in this research between girls' dress or conduct, and, as a consequence, their risk of being sexually assaulted, undermine acceptance of sexual consent, propagate myths and stereotypes about sexual violence and sexual offenders in our society, and put excessive expectations on girls not to express sexual desire and to keep safe.

Recommendations

1. There is an onus on those contributing to public discourse on sexualisation to shift it from being an issue solely about child protection towards one about the protection of girls and women in our society. This would enrich public discourse on how we can address important social issues pertaining to gender inequalities, sexist culture and the impact of gender-based double standards, as well as narrow gender typing in Irish society.

2. A public awareness campaign – designed to challenge victim-blaming attitudes and to emphasise the significance of sexual consent, and to reinforce acceptance that women's and girls' bodies are their property – should be introduced to promote gender equality and to challenge heterosexist attitudes to gender violence. This campaign should be bolstered by Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) at primary and post-primary levels, which might identify different forms of engagement to help young people work through principles in practice towards enhancing their thinking about consent.

3. Schools and other agencies should be encouraged and supported to address sexism and gendered or sexual harassment within young people's cultures through education or school-based sanctions, as appropriate.

4. More awareness campaigns on sexual assault are needed in Irish society; some of these campaigns should be targeted at younger people and should not focus on making victims responsible for sexual assault (e.g. 'Don't be that Guy' Sexual Assault Initiative). Such campaigns need to keep a focus on the importance of sexual consent.

5. Research could explore the ways in which children and young people are represented in traditional and online media items on sexualisation, particularly sensational items, to assess the impact on public and parental attitudes and children and young people's well-being.

8.2.4   Data protection

Key findings

› Data protection and privacy need to be given significant consideration in view of the reality that children and young people are going online at younger ages and are utilising a variety of websites and applications.

› Children and young people share a lot of personal information on social network sites and the reality is that they leave permanent records of what they do online.

› Many parents are concerned about risks posed by children's online activities in terms of them unwittingly breaking the law or in terms of jeopardising their future education and employment prospects.

› Data from stakeholders also suggest that these are justifiable concerns, particularly in relation to children who are already identified as vulnerable.

Recommendations

1. The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner should be sufficiently resourced to carry out its obligations in this area and to undertake effective public awareness strategies on data protection rights, with a strong focus on transmitting key messages to parents, children and stakeholders who work directly with children.

2. The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner might also take the lead in inviting key multiple stakeholders in the field of child protection to develop policy in this area, so that data protection can be best reconciled with the need to respect the best interests of children and young people, and in instances where the best interests of children may be in conflict (as in cases of user-generated online content, abusive online peer-to-peer communication).

179

3. The Research Team is aware of new regulation on data protection being introduced at European level, which should also provide a basis for updating Irish legislation in this field.
4. The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner should continue to be resourced to publicise and develop resources for lessons on data protection in the CSPE curriculum.

8.2.5   Education

Key findings

› There are Irish guidelines, policies and arrangements in place in a range of educational areas that relate to the subject of this research, including Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE); Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), which includes Stay Safe (Child Abuse Prevention Programme) and RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme).

› Digital media literacy has been introduced as a short course in the newly revised Junior Cycle programme.

› The recommendations are based on strengthening what already exists, but also on recognising what needs to be put in place to address gaps in education in this sphere.

Recommendations

› Education on data protection and how to respond to violations of privacy should be prioritised in the Stay Safe, CSPE and related RSE syllabi, and could be complemented by inputs in other subject areas, such as business studies, media studies, IT skills/ digital literacy training.

› **Stay Safe**
At the time of writing, the Stay Safe Programme was under review, but the findings of this study point to the need for its remit to include positive, safe and effective use of digital technologies for children, thus ensuring that online risk, safety and rights are configured as part of the broader child protection/welfare/rights agenda in Irish society.

› **CSPE and related RSE syllabi**
1. While the RSE Programme may have developed out of a perception of children and young people's sexualities as problematic, a reframing of this programme in line with children's rights and sexual citizenship values is now required, in order to promote its potential as an effective educational strategy.
2. There is a need for material to be included in RSE that provides realistic relational scenarios or that start where young people 'are at', in order to provoke young people to think critically and to develop their own ethics of care and empathy with each other.
3. Learning about issues such as respect, consent and reciprocity in sexual relationships needs to be grounded in children and young people's real-life relational contexts and include the sphere of digital sexual communication.
4. The findings pertaining to the discourse of sexualisation in Ireland indicate the need for children and young people to have space and opportunity in the RSE Programme to critically analyse dominant and oppressive constructions of masculinities and femininities, and their own relationships with these constructions, as well as to explore connections between sexism and misogyny in popular culture and sexual violence in wider society. The cross-curricular approach to RSE, if implemented, could ideally support learning about sexualities and relationships as socially constructed and in ways that are framed around struggles for recognition and rights, justice and equalities.

8.2.6   Consumer education and critical media literacy

Key findings

› In other jurisdictions, regulation is coupled with educational inputs, both formal and informal and involving diverse agencies, in order to enable children to better understand and critically engage with advertising, marketing and the workings of media in society.

› Critical exploration and creative media practices have the potential to enable children and young people to think about their own engagement with consumer and popular culture – the positives and the negatives.

› Media literacy and consumer education in different forms and for different constituencies can provide an important accompaniment to regulation. In some countries, it is introduced from the earliest age, but currently it is a very underdeveloped educational approach in Ireland.

› Media literacy and consumer education cannot be expected to insulate people from the media's influence or the commercial world. This is not its purpose. Rather, it seeks to provide space and information to help people to think about their own engagements with the commercial world and to make more informed judgements and decisions in a media-rich consumer society.

Recommendations

1. A working group should be established with the following objectives: (a) to advance a strong media literacy educational framework in Irish society; (b) to explore how critical media literacy could best be introduced and further developed in formal and informal education settings in the Irish context; and (c) to develop such a framework in accordance with international best practice in this field.

2. The findings from this study support the recommendation made by the Internet Content Advisory Group (2014) – that Internet safety and digital literacy skills should be taught as part of the core curriculum in both primary and post-primary schools.

3. The development of a strong framework for ethical digital citizenship education for children entering their teenage years could potentially be of benefit. This could usefully be underpinned by a strong focus on children's rights as they relate to the Internet and future policy developments in the field of children's rights online (e.g. the application of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to the Internet, see Livingstone and O'Neill, 2014).

8.2.7   Regulation

Key findings

› As this study demonstrates, there has been significant growth in a self-regulatory environment in Europe and in specific countries in recent years.

› Much of the self-regulation that has happened has been driven by external pressure from Government and from specific interests, representative organisations or campaigning coalitions in civil society. Recent examples, particularly in the UK, Australia and Ireland, indicate that this is set to continue.

› There are advantages and disadvantages bound up with legislation, co-regulation and self-regulation, and thus the pursuit of regulation in any particular sphere needs to be informed by a rigorous cost-benefit analysis, reasonable certainty about implementation and enforcement, as well as sufficient evidence that advertising and marketing are playing a more important part in causing harm than other factors in children's lives.

› There are potential negative, unintended consequences of extending regulation if all the implications are not foreseen or anticipated (e.g. more regulation of TV advertising can potentially shift the advertising spend to other less regulated media).

› As companies operate across different media and markets, more challenges are posed in terms of regulating their activities, and regulatory bodies need to be fit for purpose, in order to address these challenges.

› Furthermore, these challenges are happening at a time when self-regulation is the dominant trend in most countries. Governments and statutory authorities have oversight and can encourage self-regulators to do more, if necessary under the threat of additional regulation (co-regulation or regulation by statute). They can be assisted, supported and lobbied by organisations or groups in civil society in this regard.

› The findings from this study indicate support for measures to be taken by all authorities with a regulatory function.

Recommendation for general regulation

1. Considering the level of parental concern about different aspects of children and young people's Internet use, and their strong desire for Internet provision that is safe and Internet conduct that poses less risk for children and young people, the Research Team reviewed and support the measures recommended by the Internet Content Governance Advisory Board (2014) in its report. Recommendations designed to provide a more robust regulatory and educational institutional infrastructure are particularly welcome, as are measures suggested specifically to respond to cyberbullying and harassment, and access to age-inappropriate online material.

Recommendations for regulatory authorities

1. Enhance the engagement of regulatory authorities with children and young people and in relation to all their different activities.
2. Strengthen Codes of Practice and their provisions relating to children and young people as required, and in accordance with changing trends.
3. Clarify concepts which are not defined for members of the public, but which are nonetheless employed in the deliberations on complaints by regulatory authorities. This would help members of the public to better assess if a complaint is likely to be covered by the Code or not.
4. Make the websites of regulatory authorities more user-friendly for both parents and children by providing Codes of Practice in abbreviated and completed forms, by providing more information, educational resources and games that can be used in formal and informal educational settings.
5. Develop capacity to ensure swift and appropriate action on complaints made, and fast-track complaints that at first glance seem to fit the criteria, thus building public confidence in the potential of regulation.
6. Make publicly available their case studies/complaints bulletins when guidelines are contravened, in the interests of transparency and as an important point of public consideration and debate.
7. Undertake the required research at regular intervals, in order to track changes in community standards.
8. Undertake public awareness exercises and meaningful stakeholder engagement on a regular basis.
9. Demonstrate what they are doing to increase the number of signatories to Codes of Practice.
10. Demonstrate what they are doing to ensure compliance with Codes beyond simply relying on members of the public to make complaints.
11. Strengthen sanctions for signatories not complying with Codes of Practice.
12. Require signatories to devise ways to encourage feedback from consumers in person or online on any aspects of advertising, marketing or retail that might concern them.

8.2.8   Research

Key findings

› This research provides a corpus of data into what parents and a small number of young adults and key stakeholders think about aspects of the commercialisation and sexualisation of children in Irish society and what needs to be done to address the challenges posed.

› However, accessing the views of young adults demonstrated to the Research Team the need to engage children and young people themselves in research in this field.

› The young adults interviewed had limited experience of social media as children and young people, and they viewed themselves as constituting an entirely different generational cohort, which is understandable given their ages and status as adults. On this basis, the data they provide are valuable in their own right, but provide little by way of insight into children and young people's perspectives and experiences of the issues under investigation.

› The literature review conducted for this research reveals that the views and experiences of children and young people in other cultural contexts have been elicited and proved useful for the purpose of informing policy-making in this field.

Recommendations

1. The views and experiences of children and young people should inform any future research conducted in this field.

2. Parents have assumptions about children's sexual, gender and commercial worlds. These have to be considered in the wider context of the available evidence and having also taken into account the views and experiences of children and young people of these worlds.

3. The lack of data on children and young people's gender, sexual and commercial cultures, and the key factors/influences informing them, need to be addressed in the Irish context.

4. When regulatory bodies undertake public knowledge assessments/satisfaction surveys of their activities, they should also access children and young people's views and experiences.

5. Other studies reviewed for the purpose of this research have accessed children and young people's views and experiences, using both traditional and novel research methods, some of which might usefully inform future research in this field in the Irish context.
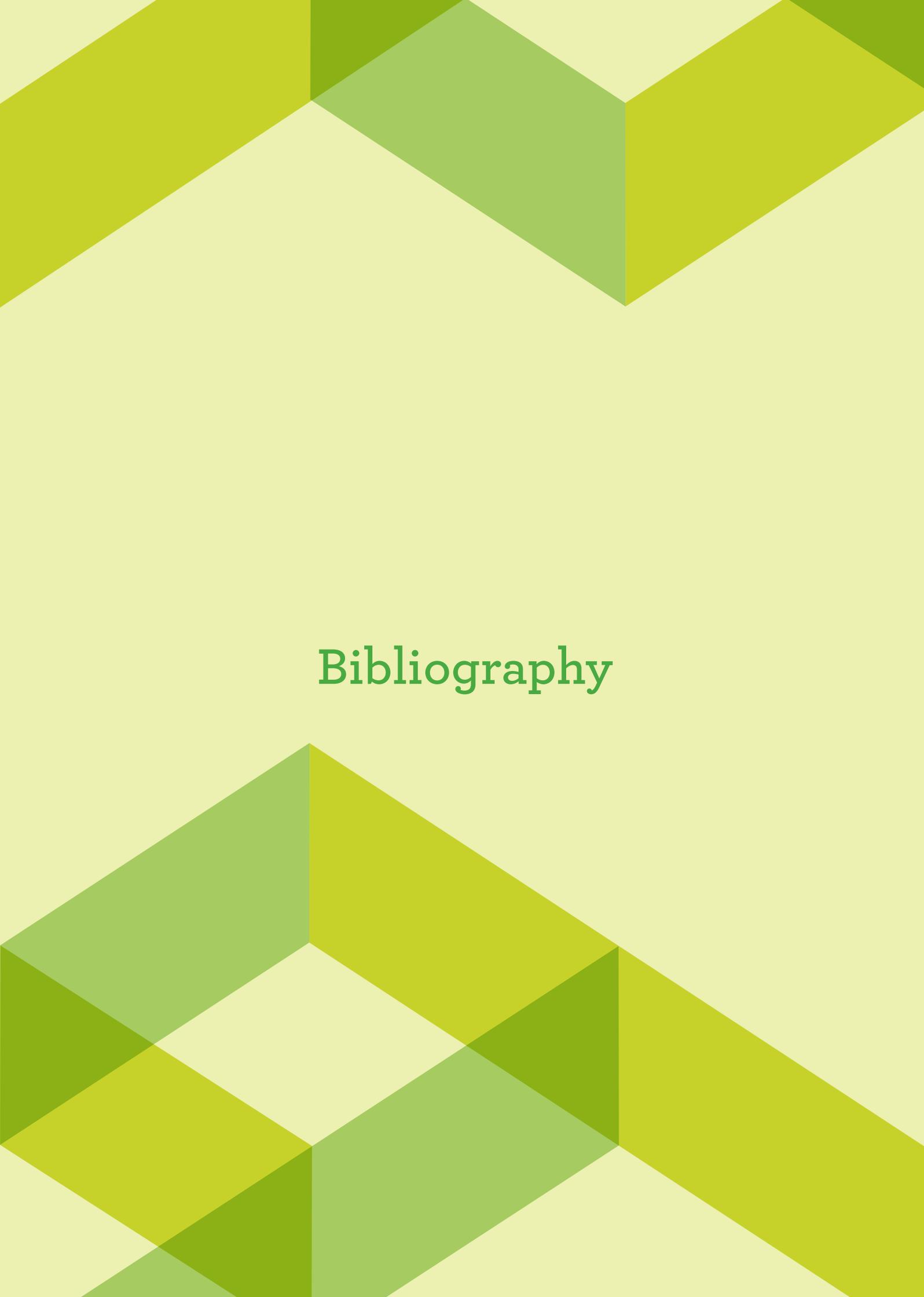
Bibliography

AANA (2009) *AANA Code for Marketing and Advertising Communications to Children*. Sydney: Australian Association of National Advertisers. Available at: http://aana.com.au/content/uploads/2014/05/AANA-Code-For-Marketing-Advertising-Communications-To-Children.pdf

AANA (2014, 3 February) 'AANA opposes Government Regulation of Outdoor Media in Queensland' (press release). Sydney: Australian Association of National Advertisers.

Abrams, M.A. (1959) *The Teenage Consumer (Teenage Consumer Spending in 1959)*. London: London Press Exchange.

ACMA (2009) *Guide to Children's Television Standards*. Sydney: Australian Communications and Media Authority. Available at: http://www.acma.gov.au/webwr/aba/contentreg/codes/television/documents/childrens_tv_standards_2009.pdf

Adams, P. (2003) 'Paedophilia Inc', *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, 21-22 June 2003, p. 15.

Aitken, S.C. (2001) *Geographies of Young People: The Morally Contested Spaces of Identity*. London: Routledge.

Albury, K. and Lumby, C. (2010) 'Too Much? Too Young? The Sexualisation of Children Debate in Australia', *Media Information Australia,* Vol. 135, pp. 141-52.

Alcohol Action Ireland (2014) *Alcohol Action Ireland's Submission to the Advertising Standards for Ireland on the Review of its Code of Standards for Advertising*. Dublin: Alcohol Action Ireland.

Alcohol Beverage Federation of Ireland (2013) *Digital Media Best Practice Principles*. Dublin: Alcohol Beverage Federation of Ireland. Available from: http://www.abfi.ie/Sectors/ABFI/ABFI.nsf/vPagesABFI/Responsibilities~digital-media/$File/ABFI+Principles+on+Digital+Marketing+final.pdf

Alcohol Marketing Communications Monitoring Body (AMCMB) (2010) *Limiting the Exposure of Young People to Alcohol Advertising*, Fifth Annual Report. Dublin: Department of Health and Children. Available at: http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/15830/1/amcmb_5th_report%5B1%5D.pdf

Anti-Bullying Working Group (2013) *Action Plan on Bullying*, Report to the Minister for Education and Skills. Dublin: Department of Education and Skills.

APA (2007) *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Available at: http://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report-full.pdf

Arthur, C. (2013, 25 February) 'Iceland seeks Internet Pornography Ban,' *The Guardian*.

ASA (2012) *Education Resources. Resources for Schools: Ad:Check – Understanding advertising regulation*. London: Advertising Standards Authority. Available at: http://www.asa.org.uk/News-resources/School-parent-resources.aspx

ASC (2010) *The Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children*. Toronto and Quebec: Advertising Standards Canada.

ASTI (2012) *ASAI announces an extension of its digital remit. Dublin: Association of Secondary Teachers*, Ireland.

Attwood, F. (2006) 'Sexed Up: Theorizing the Sexualisation of Culture', *Sexualities*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 77-94.

Attwood, F. (ed.) (2009) *Mainstreaming Sex: The sexualisation of Western culture*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Attwood, F. and Smith, C. (2011) 'Investigating young people's sexual cultures: An introduction', *Sex Education*, Vol. 11, pp. 235-42.

Attwood, F., Barker, M., Bragg, S., Egan, D., Evans, A., Harvey, L., Hawkes, G., Heckert, J., Holford, N., Macvarish, J., Martin, A., McKee, A., Mowlabocus, S., Paasonen, S., Renold, E., Ringrose, J., Valentine, L., Watson, A.F. and van Zoonen, L. (2012) 'Engaging with the Bailey Review: Blogging, academia and authenticity', *Psychology and Sexuality*, Vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 69-94.

Australian Government (2009) *Government Response: Inquiry into the Sexualisation of Children in the Contemporary Media Environment*. Canberra: Australian Government.

Autio, M. and Heinonen, V. (2004) 'To Consume or Not to Consume? Young People's Environmentalism in the Affluent Finnish Society' *Young*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 137-53.

BAI (2011) *Children's Commercial Communications Code Consultation Document*. Dublin: Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.

BAI (2013) *Children's Commercial Communications Code, Dublin: Broadcasting Authority of Ireland*. Available at: http://www.bai.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/201308_CCCC_English_vFinal.pdf

Bailey, R. (2011) *Letting Children be Children: Report of an independent review of the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood*. London: HMSO.

Baird, B. (2013) 'National Virtue and the "Media Sexualisation of Children" Discourse in Australia', *Sexualities*, Vol. 16, No. 5-6, pp. 651-64.

Baker, N. (2012, 26 July) 'Surge in fears over sexualisation of children', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/surge-in-fears-over-sexualisation-of-children-202008.html

Baker, N. (2013, 7 November) 'Teenagers Unwittingly Creating Porn', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/archives/2013/1107/ireland/aposteenagers-unwittingly-creating-pornapos-248767.html

Bale, C. (2011) 'Raunch or romance? Framing and interpreting the relationship between sexualized culture and young people's sexual health', *Sex Education*, Vol. 11, No.3, pp. 303-13.

Banet-Weiser, J. (2011) 'Branding the Post-Feminist Self: Girls' Video Production and YouTube'. In: M.C. Kearney (ed.), Mediated Girlhoods: New Explorations of Girls' Media Culture. New York: Peter Lang (pp. 277-94). Available at: http://www.amazon.com/Mediated-Girlhoods-Explorations-Girls-Culture/dp/1433105616

Bartlett, M. (2008) 'Sex Sells: Child sexualization and the media', *Screen Education*, No. 51, pp. 106-12.

Bate, C. and Reed, W. (2009) 'Child's Play? Advertising to Children in Canada', *Young Consumers: Insight and Ideas for Responsible Marketers*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 261-64. Available at: http://gala-marketlaw.com/pdfs/advertisingtochildrenCanada1009.pdf

Beasley, H.A. (2008) "Girls Gone Skank: The Sexualization of Girls in American Culture', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 41, No. 6, pp. 1070-72.

Bennett, A. (2014, 13 January) 'Lidl ends sweets at checkout counters in healthy eating push', *The Huffington Post, UK*. Available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/01/13/lidl-sweets-checkouts_n_4588040.html

Biddulph, S. (2013) *Raising Girls: Helping your daughter to grow up wise, warm and strong.* London: HarperThorsons.

Boden, S. (2006) 'Another day, another demand: How parents and children negotiate consumption matters', *Sociological Research Online*, Vol. 11, No. 2.

Boyd, B. and Somers, E. (2013, 5 December) 'That's entertainment: Our bumper TV, film and music round up', *The Irish Times*. http://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/that-s-entertainment-our-bumper-tv-film-and-music-roundup-1.1601426

Boyd, D. and Marwick, A. (2009) 'The Conundrum of Visibility: Youth Safety and the Internet', Journal of *Children and Media*, Vol. 3, pp. 410-14.

Bragg, S. (2012) 'Dockside Tarts and Modesty Boards: A Review of Recent Policy on Sexualisation', *Children and Society*, Vol. 26, No. 5, pp. 406-14.

Bragg, S. and Buckingham, D. (2009) 'Too much, too young? Young people, sexual media and learning'. In: F. Attwood (ed.), *Mainstreaming Sex: The sexualization of Western culture*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Bragg, S., Buckingham, D., Russell, R. and Willett, R. (2011) 'Too much, too soon? Children, "sexualization" and consumer culture', *Sex Education*, Vol. 11, pp. 279-92.

Bragg, S. and Buckingham, D. (2013) 'Global concerns, local negotiations and moral selves: Contemporary parenting and the "sexualisation of childhood" debate', *Feminist Media Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 643-59.

Braidotti, R. (2006) *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bramhill, N. (2013, 23 May) 'Controversial US child pageant to make Irish debut', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/controversial-us-child-pageant-to-make-irish-debut-232020.html

Bramhill, N. (2013, 29 August) '8-year-old hired out as pageant coach', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/8-year-old-hired-out-as-pageant-coach-241328.html

Bramhill, N. (2013, 2 September) 'Late Late warned over child pageants', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/late-late-warned-over-child-pageants-241641.html

Bramhill, N. (2013, 19 September) 'Organiser of Irish pageant "can't understand what all the fuss is about" ', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/organiser-of-irish-pageant-cant-understand-what-all-the-fuss-is-about-243480.html

Brett, S. (2012, 25 November) 'Tween market worth €200m annually', *Sunday Business Post*.

British Retail Consortium (2011) *Responsible Retailing: BRC Childrenswear Guidelines.* London: British Retail Consortium.

Brookes, F. and Kelly, P. (2009) 'Dolly girls: Tweenies as artefacts of consumption', *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 6, pp. 599-613.

Brown, J., L'Engle, K., Pardun, C.J., Guo, G., Kenneavy, K. and Jackson, C. (2006) 'Sexy Media Matter: Exposure to sexual content in music, movies, television and magazines predicts black and white adolescents' sexual behaviour', *Pediatrics*, Vol. 117, No. 4, pp. 1018-27.

Brown, J. and Newcomer, S. (1991) 'Television viewing and adolescents' sexual behaviour', *Journal of Homosexuality*, Vol. 21, No. 1-2, pp. 77-91.

Brusdal, R. and Lavik, R. (2008) 'Just shopping? A closer look at youth and shopping in Norway', *Young*, Vol. 16, pp. 393-408.

Byron, T. (2008) *Safer Children in a Digital World: The Report of the Byron Review.* London: Department for Children, Schools and Families, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Byron, T. (2010) *Do We Have Safer Children in a Digital World? A review of the progress since the 2008 Byron Review.* London: Department for Children, Schools and Families. Available at: https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/Safegauardingchildren/Page1/DCSF-00290-2010

Buckingham, D. (2009) *The Impact of the Commercial World on Children's Wellbeing: Report of an Independent Assessment.* London: Department for Children, Schools and Families, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Buckingham, D. (2011) *The Material Child: Growing Up in Consumer Culture.* Cambridge: Polity.

Buckingham, D. and Bragg, S. (2005) 'Opting in to (and out of) childhood: Young people, sex and the media'. In: J. Qvortrup (ed.), *Studies in Modern Childhood: Society, Agency, Culture.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (pp. 59-77).

Buckingham, D., Whiteman, N., Willett, R. and Burn, A.N. (2007) *The Impact of the Media on Children and Young People, with a particular focus on computer games and the Internet: Prepared for the Byron Review on children and new technology.* London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Buckingham, D., Willett, R., Bragg, S. and Russell, R. (2010) *Sexualised goods aimed at children: A report to the Scottish Parliament Equal Opportunities Committee.* Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament Equal Opportunities Committee.

Buckley, D. (2013, 20 February) 'Can Iceland succeed in its bid to ban online pornography?', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/analysis/can-iceland-succeed-in-its-bid-to-ban-online-pornography-223144.html

Buckley, D. (2013, 30 July) 'Special Report: ISPs say blocking porn job of censor', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/archives/2013/0730/ireland/special-report-isps-say-blocking-porn-job-of-censor-238290.html

Cadwalladr, C. (2013, 16 June) 'Porn wars: The debate that's dividing academia', *The Guardian/Observer*. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2013/jun/16/internet-violent-porn-crime-studies

Cahill, K., (2014) 'Where is the critical voice in Junior Cycle reform?', Unpublished Paper presented at the 'Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Children Conference', University College Cork, 28-29 April 2014.

Cai, X. and Zhao, X. (2013) 'Online Advertising on Popular Children's Websites: Structural Features and Privacy Issues', *Computers in Human Behavior,* Vol. 29, No. 4, pp. 1510-18.

Calvert, S.L. (2008) 'Children as consumers: Advertising and marketing', *The Future of Children,* Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 205-34.

Canavan, J. (2012) 'Family and Family Change in Ireland: An Overview', *Journal of Family Issues,* Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 10-28.

Carey, T. (2011) *Where Has My Little Girl Gone?* Oxford: Lion Hudson plc.

CARI (2010) *Annual Report 2010.* Dublin: Children at Risk in Ireland.

CARI (2011) *Annual Report 2011.* Dublin: Children at Risk in Ireland.

CARI (2012) *Annual Report 2012.* Dublin: Children at Risk in Ireland.

Castells, M. (2000) 'Information Technology and Global Capitalism'. In: W. Hutton and A. Giddens (eds.), *On the Edge: Living with Global Capitalism.* London: Jonathan Cape (pp. 52-74).

CCI (2013) *Annual Report 2013.* Dublin: Central Copy Clearance Ireland. Available at: http://www.copyclear.ie

Charlton, A. (2013, 19 September) 'French Senate seeks jail terms over child pageant', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/french-senate-seeks-jail-terms-over-child-pageants-243479.html

Cheyne, A.D., Dorfman, L., Bukofzer, E. and Harris, J.L. (2013) 'Marketing Sugary Cereals to Children in the Digital Age: A Content Analysis of 17 Child Targeted Websites', *Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives,* Vol. 18, No. 5, pp. 563-82.

Chin, E. (2001) *Purchasing Power: Black Kids and American Consumer Culture.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Clapton, G. and Cree, V.E. (2013) 'Moral Panics and Social Work: Towards a Sceptical View of UK Child Protection', *Critical Social Policy,* Vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 197-217.

Clarke, B. and Svanaes, S. (2012) *Digital marketing and advertising to children: A literature review.* Brussels: Advertising Education Forum. Available at: http://www.aeforum.org/gallery/8612144.pdf

Clarke, D. (2013a, 28 September) 'Violent video game no longer shocks as it gets devoured by mainstream', *The Irish Times*.

Clarke, D. (2013b, 28 September) 'The shocking truth is that this notorious video game is no longer shocking', *The Irish Times*. http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/tv-radio-web/the-shocking-truth-is-that-this-notorious-video-game-is-no-longer-shocking-1.1542855

Cody, K. (2012) "BeTween two worlds": Critically exploring marketing segmentation and liminal consumers', *Young Consumers: Insight and Ideas for Responsible Marketers,* Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 284-302.

Coffey, A. (2013, 11 June) 'Is €713 too much to spend on a Communion? Most parents don't think so', *Thejournal.ie*. Available at: http://www.Thejournal.ie/holy-communion-cost-945831-Jun2013

Collins, R.L., Elliott, M.N., Berry, S.H., Kanouse, D.E., Kunkel, D., Hunter, S.B. and Miu, A. (2004) 'Watching sex on television predicts adolescent initiation of sexual behaviour', *Pediatrics*, Vol. 114, No. 3, pp. 280-89.

Commission for Communications Regulation (2012) *Code of Practice: Premium Rate Services* (Reference: ComReg: 12/29; Decision: D05/12). Dublin: Commission for Communications Regulation. Available at: http://www.comreg.ie/_fileupload/publications/ComReg1229.pdf

Committee of Advertising Practice (2010) *The UK Code of Non-Broadcast Advertising, Sales Promotion and Direct Marketing*. London: HMSO.

Consumer Agency and Ombudsman (1997) *The Consumer Ombudsman's Guidelines: Sponsorship and Other Marketing in Schools*. Helsinki: Consumer Agency and Ombudsman. Available at: http://www.kkv.fi/globalassets/kkv-suomi/julkaisut/linjaukset/aihekohtaiset-linjaukset/en/sponsorship-and-other-marketing-at-schools-1997.pdf

Cook, D.T. (2000) 'The Other "Child Study": Fighting Children as Consumers in Market Research, 1910s – 1990s', *The Sociological Quarterly,* Vol. 41, No.3, pp. 487-507.

Coy, M. (2009) 'Milkshakes, lady lumps and growing up to want boobies: How the sexualisation of popular culture limits girls' horizons', *Child Abuse Review*, Vol. 18, No. 6, pp. 372-83.

Coy, M. and Garner, M. (2012) 'Definitions, discourses and dilemmas: Policy and academic engagement with the sexualisation of popular culture', *Gender and Education,* Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 285-301.

Croffey, A. (2013, 19 August) 'Gardaí speak to young girl involved in incident at Slane concert', *Thejournal.ie*. Available at: http://www.Thejournal.ie/concert-eminem-slane-girl-1044405-Aug2013/

Croghan, R., Griffin, C., Hunter, J. and Phoenix, A. (2006) 'Style failure: Consumption, identity and social exclusion', *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 4, pp. 463-78.

Cross, G. (2002) 'Valves of Desire: A Historian's Perspective on Parents, Children and Marketing', *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 29, No.3, pp. 441-47.

Cruz, D. (2013, 20 July) 'The French Government bans Child Beauty Pageants and I hope it catches on', *The Huffington Post*. Available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/deborah-cruz/the-french-government-ban_b_3958301.html

Curley, H. (2005, 2 September) 'We're educators, not providers of cannon-fodder for multinationals', *Politico: Social and Political Issues*. Available at: http://politico.ie/archive/were-educators-not-providers-cannon-fodder-multinationals

Davidson, J. and Martellozzo, E. (2013) 'Exploring young people's use of social networking sites and digital media in the Internet safety context: A comparison of the UK and Bahrain', *Information, Communication & Society*, Vol. 16, No. 9, pp. 1456-76.

Davy (2014) 'UK Culture Secretary questions whether betting advertising regulation needs to be addressed', *Davy View*. Available at: https://www.davy.ie/research/public/article.htm?id=Davy_Morning_Equity_Briefing_03032014_moneBLinkS0008C0001Sct.htm

DCYA (2013) *State of the Nation's Children: Ireland 2012*, Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Dublin: Government Publications. Available at: http://www.dcya.gov.ie/documents/research/StateoftheNationsChildren2012.pdf

Department for Education (2013) *Letting Children be Children: Progress Report. Report of Progress on the Recommendations of the Independent Review of the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood by Reg Bailey*. London: Department for Education. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/203333/Bailey_Review_Progress_Report.pdf

Department of Health (2013, 24 October) 'Ministers Fitzgerald, Reilly and White announce Measures to Deal with Alcohol Misuse Minimum Unit Pricing and Regulation of Advertising and Sponsorship to be provided for in a Public Health Bill' (press release). Dublin: Department of Health. Available at: http://health.gov.ie/blog/press-release/ministers-fitzgerald-reilly-and-white-announce-measures-to-deal-with-alcohol-misuse-minimum-unit-pricing-and-regulation-of-advertising-and-sponsorship-to-be-provided-for-in-a-public-health-bill/

Devane, M. (2013, 19 May) 'Little Appetite for New BAI Children's Code', *Sunday Business Post*.

Dhar, T. and Baylis, K. (2011) 'Fast-Food Consumption and the Ban on Advertising Targeting Children: The Quebec Experience', *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 48, No. 5, pp. 799-813. Available at: http://works.bepress.com/kathy_baylis/33

Dittmar, H. (2005) 'Compulsive buying – A growing concern? An examination of gender, age and endorsement of materialistic values as predictors', *British Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 96, No. 4, pp. 467-91.

Dotson, M.J. and Hyatt, E.M. (2005) 'Major influence factors in children's consumer socialization', *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 22, No.1, pp. 35-42.

Dresden, B. (2012) 'Legal and Regulatory Controls on Advertising and Marketing to Children in the United Kingdom: Legal Briefing', *Young Consumers: Insight and Ideas for Responsible Marketers*, Vol. 13, No. 3. Available at: http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?issn=1747-3616&volume=13&issue=3&articleid=17051105&show=html

Duits, L. and Van Zoonen, L. (2011) 'Coming to terms with sexualization', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 5, pp. 491-506.

Durham, M.G. (2008) *The Lolita Effect: The Media Sexualisation of Young Girls and What We Can Do About It* (1st edition). Woodstock: The Overlook Press.

Duschinsky, R. (2012) 'The 2010 UK Home Office "Sexualisation of Young People" Review: A Discursive Policy Analysis', *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol. 41, No. 4, pp. 715-31.

Duschinsky, R. (2013) 'The Emergence of Sexualization as a Social Problem: 1981-2010', *Social Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 137-56.

Economist, The (2013, 23 April) 'Why does liberal Iceland want to ban online pornography? The Economist Explains', *The Economist*. Available at: http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2013/04/economist-explains-why-iceland-ban-pornography

Edwards, E. (2014, 7 January) 'Public concern about access to personal data on rise in Ireland', *The Irish Times*. Available at: http://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/public-concern-about-access-to-personal-data-on-rise-in-ireland-1.1646247

Egan, R.D. and Hawkes, G.L. (2008) 'Imperiled and Perilous: Exploring the History of Childhood Sexuality', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 355-67.

Egan, R.D. (2013) *Becoming Sexual: A Critical Appraisal of the Sexualization of Girls*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Egan, R.D. and Hawkes, G. (2009) 'The problem with protection: Or, why we need to move towards recognition and the sexual agency of children', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3, pp. 389-400.

Elliott, R. and Leonard, C. (2004) 'Peer pressure and poverty: Exploring fashion brands and consumption symbolism among children of the "British poor" ', *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 347-59.

Elm, M.S. (2009), 'Exploring and negotiating femininity: Young women's creation of style in a Swedish Internet community', *Young*, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 241-64.

Else-Quest, N.M. and Hyde, J.S. (2009) 'The missing discourses of development: Commentary on Lerum and Dworkin', *Journal of Sex Research*, Vol. 46, No. 4, pp. 264-67.

European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA) (2010) *Advertising Self-Regulation in Europe and Beyond: A Reference Guide to Self-Regulatory Systems and Codes of Advertising Practice* (Blue Book, 6th edition). Brussels: European Advertising Standards Alliance.

Evans, J. and Chandler, J. (2006) 'To Buy or Not to Buy: Family Dynamics and Children's Consumption', *Sociological Research Online*, Vol. 11, No. 2.

Family Lives and TeenBoundaries (2012) *All of our concerns: Commercialisation, sexualisation and hypermasculinity*. London: Family Lives. Available at: http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_95353-6.pdf

Fanghanel, A. (2013) 'Approaching/departure: Effacement, erasure and "undoing" the fear of crime', *Cultural Geographies,* Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 1-19. Available at: http://cgj.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/08/07/1474474013495643

Farrell, L. and Shields, M.A. (2007) 'Children as consumers: Investigating child diary expenditure data', *Canadian Journal of Economics*, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 445-67.

Faulkner, J. (2010) 'The Innocence Fetish: The Commodification and Sexualisation of Children in the Media and Popular culture', *Media International Australia*, Vol. 135, pp. 106-17.

Fegan, J. (2013, 21 October) 'Teens in a Tech Minefield', *Irish Independent* 'Lifestyle' section, p. 14. Available from: http://www.independent.ie/lifestyle/teens-in-a-tech-minefield-29674294.html

Fehan, J. and Kiernan, J. (2013, 22 September) 'Children's pageant held in pub beer garden after row', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/childrens-pageant-held-in-pub-beer-garden-after-row-29596563.html

Figes, K. (2013) 'The trouble with raising girls', *Irish Independent Weekend Magazine*.

Finkelhor, D. (2009) 'The Prevention of Childhood Sexual Abuse', *The Future of Childhood*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 169-94.

Finn, C. (2013, 24 May) ' "Beauty pageants do not sexualise children", says contest organiser' *Thejournal.ie*. Available at: http://www.Thejournal.ie/beauty-pageants-do-not-sexualise-children-says-contest-organiser-923491-May2013/

Finn, C. (2013, 19 September) 'Senator calls for child beauty pageant to be cancelled', *Thejournal.ie*. Available at: http://www.Thejournal.ie/child-beauty-pageant-dublin-1090610-Sep2013/

Finnish Competition and Consumer Authority (2014, 14 February) 'Magazines were given instructions on telling apart advertisements and editorial content' (press release). Helsinki: Finnish Competition and Consumer Authority. Available at: http://www.kkv.fi/en/current-issues/press-releases/2014/magazines-were-given-instructions-on-telling-apart-advertisements-and-editorial-content/

Finnish Competition and Consumer Authority and Consumer Ombudsman (2013) *Consumer Ombudsman's Guidelines: Minors, Marketing and Purchases*. Helsinki: Finnish Competition and Consumer Agency and Consumer Ombudsman.

Finnish National Board of Education and Consumer Agency Ombudsman (2004) *Cooperation between Schools and Businesses including Marketing and Sponsorship*. Helsinki: Finnish National Board of Education and Consumer Agency Ombudsman. Available at: www.kkv.fi/globalassets/kkv-suomi/julkaisut/linjaukset/aihekohtaiset-linjaukset/en/cooperation-between-schools-and-businesses-including-marketing-and-sponsorship-2004.pdf

Flaherty, R. (2014, 30 January) 'Make-up and false lashes banned for Irish child dancers', *The Irish Times*. Available at: http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/make-up-and-false-lashes-banned-for-child-irish-dancers-1.1673952

Flood, M. (2007) 'Exposure to pornography among youth in Australia', *Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 43, No. 1, pp. 45-60.

Flood, M. (2009) 'The harms of pornography exposure among children and young people', *Child Abuse Review*, Vol. 18, No. 6, pp. 384-400.

Flynn, R. (2002) 'Broadcasting and the Celtic Tiger: From Promise to Practice', In: P. Kirby, L. Gibbons and M. Cronin (eds.), *Reinventing Ireland: Culture, Society and the Global Economy*. London: Pluto Press (pp. 160-76).

Fontaine, P. (2013, 25 October) 'Nearly everyone in Iceland has seen online porn', *The Reykjavik Grapevine*. Available at: http://grapevine.is/Home/ReadArticle/Nearly-Everyone-In-Iceland-Has-Seen-Online-Porn

Foy, K. (2013, 25 August) 'Gardaí investigate new Slane video showing schoolgirl "groped" by gang', *Irish Independent*. Available at: http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/gardai-investigate-new-slane-video-showing-schoolgirl-groped-by-gang-29516742.html

Fraser, K. and Taylor, E. (2011) *Pretty as a Picture*. London: Credos. Available at: http://www.adassoc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Pretty-as-a-picture.pdf

Fredrickson, B.L. and Harrison, K. (2005) 'Throwing like a girl: Self-objectification predicts adolescent girls' motor performance', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues,* Vol. 29, pp. 79-101.

Fredrickson, B.L., Roberts, T., Noll, S.M., Quinn, D.M. and Twenge, J.M. (1998) 'That swimsuit becomes you: Sex differences in self-objectification, restrained eating, and math performance', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 75, pp. 269-84.

Galbraith-Enami, S. and Lobstein, T. (2013) 'The Impact of Initiatives to Limit the Advertising of Food and Beverage Products to Children: A Systematic Review', *Obesity Reviews*, Vol. 14, pp. 960-74.

Gale, J. (2011) *Sexualisation of children and young teens*. Melbourne: Early Childhood Teachers Association. Available at: http://www.ecta.org.au/_dbase_upl/ECTA-JULIE_GALE_ARTICLE.pdf

Gardarsdóttir, R.B., Dittmar, H. and Aspinall, C. (2009) 'It's not the money, it's the quest for a happier self: The role of happiness and success motives in the link between financial goals and subjective well-being', *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 28, No. 9, pp. 1100-27.

Garde, A. (2011) 'Advertising regulation and the protection of children-consumers in the European Union: In the best interests of … commercial operators?', *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 523-45.

Garlick, H. (2013, 5 August) 'Successful parenting without spending money: A mother's story', *The Telegraph*. Available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/10211090/Successful-parenting-without-spending-money-a-mothers-story.html

Gauntlett, D. (2007) Creative Explorations: New Approaches to Identities and Audiences. Oxford: Routledge.

Gill, R. (2003) 'From sexual objectification to sexual subjectification: The resexualisation of women's bodies in the media', *Feminist Media Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 100-106.

Gill, R. (2006) *Gender and the Media.* Cambridge: Polity.

Gill, R. (2007) 'Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a sensibility', Journal Article Accepted version, Available at: (LSE Research Online) http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/2449/

Gill, R. (2011) 'Sexism reloaded, or it's time to get angry again!', *Feminist Media Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 61-71.

Gill, R. (2012) 'Media, Empowerment and the "Sexualization of Culture" Debates, *Sex Role*s, Vol. 66, No. 11-12, pp. 736-45. Available from: http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11199-011-0107-1

Ging, D. (2002) 'Screening the Green: Cinema under the Celtic Tiger'. In: P. Kirby, L. Gibbons and M. Cronin (eds.), *Reinventing Ireland: Culture, Society and the Global Economy*. London: Pluto Press (pp. 177-95).

Ging, D. (2005) 'A "manual on masculinity"? The consumption and use of mediated images of masculinity among teenage boys in Ireland', *Irish Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 29-52.

Ging, D. (2009) 'All-consuming images: New gender formations in post-Celtic Tiger Ireland'. In: D. Ging, M. Cronin and P. Kirby (eds.), *Transforming Ireland: Challenges, Critiques, Resources.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Gittens, G. (2013, 26 November) 'School warns parents of "unsuitable video game Grand Theft Auto" ', *Irish Independent.* Available at: http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/school-warns-parents-of-unsuitable-video-game-grand-theft-auto-29785920.html

Goldberg, M.E., Gorn, G.J., Peracchio, L.A. and Bamossy, G. (2003) 'Understanding materialism among youth', *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 278-88.

Gordon, D., Levitas, R. and Pantazis, C. (eds.) (2006) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain: The Millennium Survey*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Goswami, U. (2008) *Byron Review on the Impact of New Technologies on Children: A Research Literature Review. Child Development* (Annex H to the Byron Review). Cambridge: The National Archives. Available at: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100202100434/http:/dcsf.gov.uk/byronreview/pdfs/Goswami%20Child%20Development%20Literature%20Review%20for%20the%20Byron%20Review.pdf

Grabe, S., Ward, L.M. and Hyde, J. (2008), 'The role of the media in body image concerns amongst women: A meta-analysis of experimental and correlational studies', *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 134, No.3, pp. 460-76.

Griffin, D. (2013, 20 September) 'Fitzgerald welcomes cancellation of child beauty pageant booking', *Irish Times*. Available at: http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/fitzgerald-welcomes-cancellation-of-child-beauty-pageant-booking-1.1534572

Griffiths, R. and Casswell, S. (2010) 'Intoxigenic Digital Spaces? Youth, Social Networking Sites and Alcohol Marketing', *Drug Alcohol Review*, Vol. 29, No. 5, pp. 525-30.

Gye, H. (2013, 20 August) 'Distraught girl, 17, faces humiliation on the web after explicit pictures of her performing sex acts at Eminem gig go viral on Twitter and Instagram', *Daily Mail.* Available at: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2397841/Explicit-photos-Eminem-Slane-Castle-gig-viral-Twitter-Instagram.html

Halpenny, A.M., Nixon, E. and Watson, D. (2010) *Summary Report on Parents' and Children's Perspectives on Parenting Styles and Discipline in Ireland* (Reports, Paper 3). Dublin: Dublin Institute of Technology.

Hamilton, K. (2009) 'Consumer decision-making in low-income families: The case of conflict avoidance', *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, Vol. 8, No. 5, pp. 252-67.

Hann, M. (2014, 13 January) 'BBFC plans to introduce age ratings for music videos', *The Guardian.* Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/jan/13/bbfc-wants-age-rating-system-introduced-online-videos

Harrington, S. (2013, 9 September) 'Slane Girl incident shows double standard alive and well', *Irish Examiner.* Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/viewpoints/columnists/suzanne-harrington/slane-girl-incident-shows-double-standard-alive-and-well-242345.html

Harvey, L. (no date) 'We need a wider analysis of inequality, not the surveillance of young people', Blog post, available at Onscenity Research Network, http://www.onscenity.org/scc/sexualization/

Hassay, D.N. and Smith, M.C. (1996) 'Compulsive buying: An examination of the consumption motive', *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 13, pp. 741-52.

Hatch, L. (2011) 'The American Psychological Association Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls: A Review. Update and Commentary', *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity: The Journal of Treatment and Prevention*, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 195-211.

Hawkes, B. (2013) Remarks by Billy Hawkes, Data Protection Commissioner, at the Launch of the Children's Rights Alliance publication *Children and EU Law, Europe House*, Dublin. Dublin: Children's Rights Alliance. Available at: http://childrensrights.ie/sites/default/files/conference-proceedings/files/Data%20Protection%20and%20Children's%20EU%20Rights_Billy%20Hawkes.pdf

Hawkes, G. and Egan, R. (2008) 'Landscapes of Erotophobia: The Sexual(ized) Child in the Postmodern Anglophone West', *Sexuality and Culture*, Vol. 12, pp. 193-203.

Hawkes, C., Lobstein, T. and for the Polmakr Consortium (2011) 'Regulating the commercial promotion of food to children: A survey of actions worldwide', *International Journal of Pediatric Obesity*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 83-94. DOI: 10.3109/17477166.2010.486836

Health and Community Services Committee (2014) *Inquiry into Sexually Explicit Outdoor Advertising*, Report No. 36. Queensland: Parliamentary Committees. Available at: http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Documents/TableOffice/TabledPapers/2014/5414T4208.pdf

Hebl, M.R., King, E.G. and Lin, J. (2004) 'The swimsuit becomes us all: Ethnicity, gender, and vulnerability to self-objectification', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 30, pp. 1322-31.

Hennessey, M. (2013, 20 September) 'Heavy makeup, high heels and frilly dresses "innappropiate" on pageant children', *Thejournal.ie*. Available at: http://www.Thejournal.ie/child-beauty-pageant-1092088-Sep2013/

Hennessy, M., Bleakley, A., Fishbein, M. and Jordan, A. (2009) 'Estimating the Longitudinal Association between Adolescent Sexual Behaviour and Exposure to Sexual Media Content', Journal of Sex Research, Vol. 46, No. 6, pp. 586-96.

Hibell, B., Guttormsson, U., Ahlström, S., Balakireva, O., Bjarnason, T., Kokkevi, A. and Kraus, L. (2012) *The 2011 ESPAD Report: Substance use among students in 36 European countries*. Stockholm: The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs (CAN) and the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe.

Higonnet, A. (1998) *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*. New York: Thames and Hudson.

Hobbs, T. (2014, 13 January) 'Lidl ditches sweets from checkout queues', *The Grocer*, UK. Available at: http://www.thegrocer.co.uk/channels/discounters/lidl/lidl-ditches-sweets-from-checkout-queues/353488.article?redirCanon=1

Hodge, K. (2013, 17 September) 'Thousands line up for 'Grand Theft Auto V'', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/thousands-line-up-for-grand-theft-auto-v-243289.html

Holohan, C. (2013) 'Challenges to social order and Irish identity? Youth culture in the Sixties', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. xxxviii, No. 151, pp. 389-405.

Horan, N. (2013, 25 August) 'Slane girl won't make complaint to Gardaí', *Sunday Independent*. Available at: http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/slane-girl-wont-make-complaint-to-gardai-29525712.html

Honeyman, S. (2010) 'Consumerism, Sweets and Self-Determined Choice', *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 253-65.

Horvath, M.A.H., Alys, L., Massey, K., Pina, A., Scally, M. and Alder, J.R. (2013) *Basically … porn is everywhere: A rapid evidence assessment on the effects that access and exposure to pornography has on children and young people*, Project Report. London: Office of the Children's Commissioner for England.

Hovda, J. Sveen (2014) 'Catching the attention of young consumers in Norway – A short guide to compliance with the strict regulations on marketing directed towards children. Legal briefing', *Young Consumers*, Vol. 15, No. 1. Available at: http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/full/10.1108/YC-02-2014-00425

Hughes, B., Russell, R. and Paterson, K. (2005) 'Nothing to be had "off the peg": Consumption, identity and the immobilization of young disabled people', *Disability and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 3-17.

Hunt, S.A. and Kraus, S.A. (2009) 'Exploring the relationship between erotic disruption during the latency period and the use of sexually explicit material, online sexual behaviors, and sexual dyfunctions in young adulthood', *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity: The Journal of Treatment and Prevention*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 79-100.

Information Commissions Online (2010) *Personal information online: Code of Practice*. UK: Information Commissions Online. Available at: http://ico.org.uk/for_organisations/data_protection/topic_guides/online/~/media/documents/library/Data_Protection/Detailed_specialist_guides/personal_information_online_cop.ashx

Inglis, T., (2002) 'Pleasure Pursuits'. In: M.P. Corcoran and M. Peillon (eds.), *Ireland Unbound: A Turn of the Century Chronicle*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration (pp. 25-35).

Ipsos MORI (2008) *Children's Advertising Code: Attitudinal Study*. Dublin: Broadcasting Commission of Ireland.

Ipsos MORI (2009) *Webwise 2008 Survey of Children's Use of the Internet in Ireland*. Dublin: National Centre for Technology in Education.

Irish Cancer Society and National Women's Council of Ireland (2012) *Women and Smoking: Time to face the crisis*. Dublin: Irish Cancer Society.

Irish Cellular Industry Association (2006) *The Irish Mobile Operators' Code of Practice for the responsible and secure use of mobile services*. Dublin: Irish Cellular Industry Association.

Irish Film Classification Office (2008) *Annual Report of the Director of Film Classification 2008.* Dublin: Irish Film Classification Office (IFCO). Available at: http://www.ifco.ie/ifco/ifcoweb.nsf/lookupreports2/AF58 7BBF78FCE244802575E80031FBC5/$File/2008%20Annual%20Report%20ENGLISH.pdf?openelement

Irish Film Classification Office (2013) *Film Classification Survey – Parental Attitudes 2013.* Dublin: Irish Film Classification Office (IFCO). Available at: http://www.ifco.ie/ifco/ifcoweb.nsf/lookupreports2/54C6 3DC5C04626FE80257BDE004DF327/$File/Film%20Classification%20Survey%20-%20Parental%20 Attitudes%202013.pdf?openelement

Irish Heart Foundation, National Youth Council of Ireland and Children's Rights Alliance (2011, 13 October) '75% of Irish parents support ban of unhealthy food ads up to 9am' (press release). Dublin: Irish Heart Foundation. Available at: http://www.irishheart.ie/media/pub/parantal_poll_press_release_final_2_ logos.pdf

Irish Independent (2013, 21 September) 'Grand Theft Auto V becomes fastest selling game of all time', *Irish Independent.* Available at: http://www.independent.ie/business/technology/grand-theft-auto-v-becomes-fastestselling-game-of-all-time-29595728.html

Irish League of Credit Unions (2015, 22 February) 'CUs launch "Clued-in" – A New Financial Education Tool for Secondary Schools' (press release). Dublin: Irish League of Credit Unions. Available at: http://www.creditunion.ie/communications/news/2015/title,8905,en.php

Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance (2005) *The National Teens' Food Survey.* Dublin: Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance.

Institute for Local Self-Reliance (2009, 15 January) 'Ban on Advertising to Children – Norway'. Minneapolis: Institute for Local Self-Reliance. Available at: http://ilsr.org/rule/advertising/ban-advertising-children-norway/

Isaksen, K.J. and Roper, S. (2008) 'The impact of branding on low-income adolescents: A vicious cycle?', *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 25, No. 11, pp. 1063-87.

Jackson, S. and Vares, T. (2015) ' "Too many bad role models for us girls": Girls, Female Pop Celebrities and "Sexualisation" ', *Sexualities* (printed online prior to publication). DOI: 10.1177/1363460714550905.

Johnson, M.H. (2008) *Brain development in childhood: A literature review and synthesis for the Byron Review on the impact of new technologies on children* (Annex I to the Byron Review). Cambridge: The National Archives. Available at: http://www.lloydminster.info/libdocs/byronreview/annex_i.pdf

Joint Committee on Health and Children (2012, 11 October) *Childhood Obesity: Discussion.* Available at: http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/Debates%20Authoring/DebatesWebPack.nsf/committeetakes/ HEJ2012101100007?opendocument

Kambuta, R. (2012) 'Children, Consumption, Controversy', *Cultural Studies Review,* Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 353-59.

Kasser, T. and Kanner, A.D. (eds.) (2004) *Psychology and consumer culture: The struggles for a good life in a materialistic world.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Kearney, M.C. (2011) *Mediated girlhoods: New Explorations of Girls' Media Culture.* New York: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers.

Kehily, M.J. (2010) 'Childhood in crisis? Tracing the contours of "crisis" and its impact upon contemporary parenting practices', *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 32, No. 2, pp. 171-85.

Kehily, M.J. (2012) 'Contextualising the sexualisation of girls debate: Innocence, experience and young female sexuality', *Gender and Education*, Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 255-68.

Kehily, M.J. and Swann, J. (2003) 'Consumption and Creativity'. In: M.J. Kehily and J. Swann (eds.), *Children's Cultural Worlds.* Milton Keynes: The Open University and John Wiley.

Kelly, L., Gayle, K. and Drennan, J. (2010), 'Avoidance of Advertising in Social Networking Sites: The Teenage Perspective', *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 16-27.

Kelly, C., Nic Gabhainn, S., Clerkin, P. and Galvin, M. (2007) *Marketing of Foodstuffs in Post-Primary Schools in Ireland.* Galway: National University of Ireland, Galway and the Irish Heart Foundation. Available at: https://www.irishheart.ie/media/pub/healthpromotionreports/ihf_report__marketing_of_foodstuffs_ post_primary_2007.pdf

Keogh, E. (2013, 20 August) 'Social media firms try to block images of Slane sex act', *The Irish Times.*

Kennedy, J. and Bramhill, N. (2013, 19 September) 'Dublin hotel cancels booking for child beauty pageant', *The Irish Times.* Available at: http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/dublin-hotel-cancels-booking-for-child-beauty-pageant-1.1533747

Kenway, J. and Bullen, E. (2001) *Consuming children: Education – Entertainment – Advertising.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Kincaid, J. (1998) *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Kinsky, E.S. and Bichard, S. (2011) ' "Mom! I've seen that on a commercial!" US preschoolers' recognition of brand logos', *Young Consumers: Insight and Ideas for Responsible Marketers*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 145-58. http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/full/10.1108/17473611111141605

Kim, C., Lee, H. and Tomiuk, M.A. (2009) 'Adolescents' perceptions of family communication patterns and some aspects of their consumer socialization', *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 26, No. 10, pp. 888-907.

Kirby, P. (2010) *Celtic Tiger in Collapse: Explaining the Weaknesses of the Irish Model.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kitchin, R., O'Callaghan, C., Boyle, M., Gleeson, J. and Keaveney, K. (2012) 'Placing neoliberalism: The rise and fall of Ireland's Celtic Tiger', *Environment and Planning A,* Vol. 44, No. 6, pp. 1302-26.

Kitching, K. and Shanneik, Y. (2015) *Children's Beliefs and Belonging: A Schools and Families Report from the 'Making Communion' Study*. Cork: University College Cork. Available at: http://www.ucc.ie/en/media/academic/education/images/ChildrensBeliefsandBelongingKitchingandShanneik2015.pdf

Korsvold, T. (2012) 'Revisiting constructions of children and youth in marketing advertisements: A historical and empirical study of the Norwegian company Helly Hansen', *Young*, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 1-17.

Kunkel, D., Wilcox, B.L., Cantor, J., Palmer, E., Linn, S. and Dowrick, P. (2004) *Report of the APA Task Force on Advertising and Children*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Lally, C. (2013, 21 August) 'Gardaí expect formal complaint from girl in sex act video', *The Irish Times*. Available at: http://archive.is/VNlNC

Lambkin, M. (2010) *Drink Advertising: The Experience of Self-Regulation*. Dublin: The Marketing Institute.

Lancaster, M. (2013, 6 November) 'Sweden introduces "gender bias rating" to cinemas', *Yahoo! Movies UK and Ireland*. Available at:

Laukkanen, J., Ojansuu, U., Tolvanen, A., Alatupa, S. and Aunola, K. (2014) 'Child's Difficult Temperament and Mothers' Parenting Styles', *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 312-23.

Layte, R., McGee, H., Quail, A., Rundle, K., Cousins, G., Donnelly, C., Mulcahy, F. and Conroy, R. (2006) *The Irish Study of Sexual Health and Relationships*. Dublin: Crisis Pregnancy Agency and Department of Health and Children.

Leane, M. and Kiely, E. (2014) 'Introduction'. In: M. Leane and E. Kiely (eds.), *Sexualities and Irish Society: A Reader*. Dublin: Orpen Press (pp. xvii-xx).

Le Guay, P. (2012) 'The Regulation of Advertising to Children in Australia – Update', *Young Consumers: Insight and Ideas for Responsible Marketers*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 407-11. http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/full/10.1108/yc.2012.32113daa.002

Lerum, K. and Dworkin, S.L. (2009) ' "Bad Girls Rule": An Interdisciplinary Feminist Commentary on the Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls', *Journal of Sex Research*, Vol. 46, No. 4, pp. 250-63.

Levey Friedman, H. (2011, 10 May) 'The Evolution of American-Style Beauty Pageants', Huffington Post Style, UK. Available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/hilary-levely/the-evolution-of-american_b_860261.html

Linehan, D. (2015) 'The Centre of Everything': Ireland at the Dundrum Town Centre'. In: R. Meade and F. Dukelow (eds.), *Defining Events: Power, Resistance and Identity in Twenty-first-century Ireland*, Manchester: Manchester University Press (pp. 89-105).

Lipton, M. (2008) 'Queer Readings of Popular Culture: Searching [To] Out the Subtext'. In: S. Driver (ed.), *Queer Youth Cultures*. New York: State University of New York Press (pp. 163-79).

Livingstone, S. (2012) 'Children and online pornography – Does the evidence justify calls for more regulation', Blog. Available at: http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/48302/1/blogs.lse.ac.uk-Children_and_online_pornography__does_the_evidence_justify_calls_for_more_regulation.pdf

Livingstone, S. and Haddon, L. (2009) *EU Kids Online: Final Report*. London: EU Kids Online, London School of Economics (LSE). Available at: http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EU%20Kids%20I%20(2006-9)/EU%20Kids%20Online%20I%20Reports/EUKidsOnlineFinalReport.pdf

Livingstone, S. and Helsper, E. (2004) *Advertising foods to children: Understanding promotion in the context of children's daily lives. A review of the literature prepared for the Research Department of the Office of Communications*. London: Office of Communications (Ofcom). Available at http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/21757/2/Advertising_foods_to_children.pdf

Livingstone, S., Olafsson, K., O'Neill, B. and Donoso, V. (2012) *Towards a Better Internet for Children*. London: EU Kids Online, London School of Economics (LSE). Available at: http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EU%20Kids%20III/Reports/EUKidsOnlinereportfortheCEOCoalition.pdf

Livingstone, S. and O'Neill, B. (2014) 'Children's Rights Online: Challenges, Dilemmas and Emerging Directions'. In: S. van der Hof, B. van den Berg and B. Schermer (eds.), *Minding Minors Wandering the Web: Regulating Online Child Safety*, Information Technology and Law Series, Vol. 24. The Hague: T.M.C. Asser Press (pp. 20-38). Available at: http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-94-6265-005-3

Lundby, E. (2011) 'Consumer research on tweens: Putting the pieces together', *Young Consumers*, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 326-36. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/17473611111185878

Lunn, P. and Fahey, T. (2011) *Households and Family Structures in Ireland: A Detailed Statistical Analysis of Census 2006*. Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Family Support Agency.

MacKeogh, C. (2004) *Teenagers and the Media: A Media Analysis of Sexual Content on Television* (Report No. 10). Dublin: Crisis Pregnancy Agency.

Magee, A. (1994) 'Compulsive buying tendency as a predictor of attitudes and perceptions', *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 21, pp. 590-94. Available at: http://acrwebsite.org/volumes/7656/volumes/v21/NA-21

Marketing Magazine (2014, 3 February) 'AANA: Qld gov's proposed regulation of outdoor advertising "a sledgehammer to a nut" ', *Marketing Magazine* 'News' section. Available at: https://www.marketingmag.com.au/news-c/aana-qld-govs-proposed-regulation-of-outdoor-advertising-a-sledgehammer-to-a-nut/#.UweuAvl_uH4

Markovic, D. (2012) 'Psychosexual therapy in sexualised culture: A systemic perspective', *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 103-109.

Martens, L., Southerton, D. and Scott, S. (2004) 'Bringing Children (and Parents) into the Sociology of Consumption: Towards a Theoretical and Empirical Agenda', *Journal of Consumer Culture*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 155-82.

Marvin, K. (2012) *Not in Front of the Children. Sexualisation: Impacts and Interventions.* Sheffield: Public Health Observatory and the Centre for HIV and Sexual Health. Available at: http://www.empho.org.uk/Download/Public/12821/1/Not%20in%20front%20of%20the%20children.pdf

Mason, A., Green, T. and Amplify (2011) *Children, young people and the commercial world. London: Office of the Children's Commissioner and Amplify.* Available at: https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Children_young_people_and_the_commercial_world.pdf

McAvoy, H., Kabir, Z., Reulbach, U., McDaid, O., Metcalfe, O. and Clancy, L. (2013) *A Tobacco-Free Future – An all-island report on tobacco, inequalities and childhood.* Dublin: Institute of Public Health in Ireland and TobaccoFree Research Institute Ireland.

McCárthaigh, S. (2013, 7 November) 'Old Favourites and New Arrivals on Santa's List', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/archives/2013/1107/ireland/old-favourites-and-new-arrivals-on-santaaposs-list-248743.html

McGuire, P. (2014, 4 February) 'The Relationships and Sexuality Education Report: Recent Findings', *The Irish Times.*

McIntyre, T. (2013) 'Child Abuse Images and Cleanfeeds: Assessing Internet Blocking Schemes'. In: I. Brown (ed.), *Research Handbook on Governance of the Internet.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

McKee, A. (no date) 'Life before Internetporn: The Golden Years?', Blog post, available at Onscenity Research Network, http://www.onscenity.org/sexualization/

McKenna, P. and Childwatch.ie (2014) *Three Hazards: Child Protection in the Electronic Age.* Dublin: Barnardos.

McKinley, N.M. (1999) 'Women and objectified body consciousness: Mothers' and daughters' body experience in cultural, developmental, and familial context', *Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 35, pp.760-69.

McNair, B. (2002) *Striptease Culture: Sex Media and the Democratization of Desire.* London: Routledge.

McNeal, J.U. (1987) *From Savers to Spenders: How Children become a Consumer Market.* Malibu, CA: Center for Media Literacy. Available at: http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/savers-spenders-how-children-became-consumer-market

Meagher, J. (2013, 18 September) 'It's complicated raising teenage girls', *Irish Independent.* Available at: http://www.independent.ie/.../its-complicated-raising-teenage-girls-29578789.html

Middleton, S., Ashworth, K. and Braithwaite, I. (1998) S*mall Fortunes: Spending on Children, Childhood and Parental Sacrifice.* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Milner, M., Jnr. (2004) *Freeks, geeks, and cool kids: American teenagers, schools, and the culture of consumption.* New York: Routledge.

Ministry of Education and Culture (2013) *Good Media Literacy: National Policy Guidelines, 2013-2016. Helsinki: Department for Cultural, Sport and Youth Policy.* Available at: http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2013/liitteet/OKM13.pdf?lang=en

Mitchell, T. (2014, 8 January) 'China lifts ban on game consoles', *The Irish Times* 'Business' section. Available at: http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/1ffe5fac-7779-11e3-807e-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3lnkKRYpm

Moodie, C., Stead, M., Bauld, L., NcNeill, A., Angus, K., Hinds, K., Kwan, I., Thomas, J., Hastings, G. and O'Mara-Eves, A. (2012) *Plain Tobacco Packaging: A Systematic Review.* Available at: http://phrc.lshtm.ac.uk/papers/PHRC_006_Final_Report.pdf

Mühleisen, W. (2007) 'Mainstream Sexualization and the Potential for Nordic *New Feminism', NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research,* Vol. 15, Nos. 2-3, pp. 172-89.

Mulholland, M. (2013) *Young People and Pornography: Negotiating Pornification.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mullally, U. (2013a, 21 August) 'Explicit publication possible due to culture lacking empathy', *The Irish Times.* Available at: http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/explicit-publication-possible-due-to-culture-lacking-empathy-1.1499994

Mullally, U. (2013b, 21 August) 'Online Slane images reveal web users' empathy deficit; When Photographs of a Woman Engaged in a Sex Act Went Viral, the Subsequent Storm of Opinion Exposed a Lack of Human Dignity', *The Irish Times.* Available at: http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-35031419.html

Murnen, S.K., Wright, C. and Kaluzny, G. (2002) 'If "boys will be boys", then girls will be victims? A meta-analytical review of the research that relates masculine ideology to sexual aggression', *Sex Roles*, Vol. 46, No. 11-12, pp. 359-75.

Nairn, A. (2008) *Business thinks family.* London: Family and Parenting Institute.

Nairn, A., Omrod, J. and Bottomley, P. (2007) *Watching, Waiting and Wellbeing: Exploring the links. A study of 9 to 13 year-olds.* London: National Consumer Council. Available at: http://www.agnesnairn.co.uk/policy_reports/watching_wanting_and_wellbeing_july_2007.pdf

Najafi, S. (2002/03) 'Picturing Innocence: An Interview with Anne Higonnet', *Cabinet*, No. 9. Available at: http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/9/

Nash, C. (2009) *The Parent Child Purchase Relationship*, MPhil thesis (unpublished). Dublin: Dublin Institute of Technology.

National Cancer Registry Ireland (2011) *Cancer in Ireland 2011: Annual Report of the National Cancer Registry.* Cork: National Cancer Registry Ireland.

National Women's Council of Ireland (2013) *Submission to the Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland (ASAI), 2013 Review of the Code of Advertising Standards and the Code of Sales Promotion Practice.* Dublin: National Women's Council of Ireland.

National Youth Council of Ireland (2009) *Get 'em Young: Mapping young people's exposure to alcohol marketing in Ireland*. Dublin: National Youth Council of Ireland.

Newman, A.L. and Bach, D. (2004) 'Self-Regulatory Trajectories in the Shadow of Public Power: Resolving Digital Dilemmas in Europe and the United States', *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions*, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 387-413.

National Family and Parenting Institute (2004) *Hard Sell, Soft Targets? Parents talk about marketing to children*. London: National Family and Parenting Institute.

National Family and Parenting Institute (2011) *Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood, Briefing Paper*. London: National Family and Parenting Institute. Available at: http://socialwelfare.bl.uk/subject-areas/services-client-groups/children-young-people/familyandparentinginstitute/140915Commercialisation%20and%20sexualisation%20briefing%20-%20FINAL%20VERSION%20(3).pdf

Nielsen (2012) *Global Trust in Advertising and Brand Messages, A Nielsen Report*. Dublin: The Nielsen Company.

Ní Saidlear, C. (2014, 1 January) 'We could do a lot worse than listen to what Beyoncé has to say about sexuality', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.independent.ie/opinion/analysis/we-could-do-worse-than-listen-to-what-beyonce-has-to-say-about-sexuality-29879098.html

Norgaard, M.K., Bruns, K., Christensen, P.H. and Mikkelsen, M.R. (2007) 'Children's influence on and participation in the family decision process during food buying', *Young Consumers*, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 197-216.

Nowatski, J. and Morray, M.M. (2009) 'Women's intentions regarding, and acceptance of, self-sexualising behaviour', *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 95-107.

Oates, C.J. and Newman, N. (2010) 'Food on Young Children's Television in the UK', *Young Consumers*, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 160-69. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/17473611011074232

O'Brien, C. (2013a, 20 August) 'Slane sex act photos: A salutary lesson of how social media can exploit and abuse', *The Irish Times*. Available at: http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/slane-sex-act-photos-a-salutary-lesson-of-how-social-media-can-exploit-and-abuse-1.1500305

O'Brien, C. (2013b, 18 September) 'Console blockbuster Grand Theft Auto shifts into high gear, Game Has Long Been a Source of Controversy for Its Dark Undertones and Violent, Criminal Protagonists', *The Irish Times*. Available at: http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-35139251.html

O'Brien, C. (2013c, 20 September) 'Grand Theft Auto V', *The Irish Times*. Available at: http://www.irishtimes.com/news/technology/game-reviews/grand-theft-auto-v-1.1533177

O'Connell, J. (2013, 26 September) 'Society is obsessed with presexualised girls', *The Irish Times*. Available at: http://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/society-is-obsessed-with-presexualised-girls-1.1538499

O'Connor, M. (2013, 26 September) 'Who would buy a violent video game for a child? Terrible parents, that's who', *Irish Independent*. Available at: http://www.independent.ie/opinion/analysis/mary-mitchell-oconnor-who-would-buy-a-violent-video-game-for-a-child-terrible-parents-thats-who-29611734.html

O'Connor, F. (2013, 21 December) 'New survey reveals teen apathy towards advertising', *Daily Business Post*. Available at: http://www.businesspost.ie/#!story/Home/Media+And+Marketing/New+survey+reveals+teen+apathy+towards+advertising/id/87198161-2385-2b5f-35be-aea752386953

O'Fátharta, C. and Keogh, E. (2013a, 20 August) 'Gardaí probe Slane sex act as Facebook deletes pictures', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/gardai-probe-slane-sex-act-as-facebook-delete-pictures-240402.html

O'Fátharta, C. and Keogh, E. (2013b, 21 August) 'Slane sex act image removed from sites as Gardaí investigate', *Irish Examiner*. Available from: http://www.irishexaminer.com/archives/2013/0821/ireland/slane-sex-act-image-removed-from-sites-as-gardai-investigate-240511.html

Office of Australian Information Commissioner (2014, 28 January) 'Australians' right to privacy strengthened with new privacy laws' (press release). Sydney: Office of Australian Information Commissioner. Available at: http://www.oaic.gov.au/news-and-events/media-releases/privacy-media-releases/australian-s-right-to-privacy-strengthened-with-new-privacy-laws

Office of the Data Protection Commissioner (2011) *Facebook Ireland Ltd*. Portarlington: Office of the Data Protection Commissioner.

O'Gorman, T. (2012, 14 February) 'Irish Internet providers say move to restrict porn "censorship" ', *CI News, the Webportal for Christians*.

O'Halloran, J. (2014) *Teddy Boy Tobin by John O'Halloran*. Dublin: Writing.ie. Available at: http://www.writing.ie/tell-your-own-story/teddy-boy-tobin-by-john-ohalloran/

O'Hanlon, E. (2013a, 2 June) 'There's an ugly, dark side to Little Miss Sunshine', *Irish Independent*. Available at: http://www.independent.ie/opinion/analysis/eilis-ohanlon-theres-an-ugly-dark-side-to-little-miss-sunshine-29313974.html

O'Hanlon, E. (2013b, 22 September) 'Never mind the toddlers and tiaras, child sexualisation is all around us', *Irish Independent*. Available at: http://www.independent.ie/opinion/analysis/eilis-ohanlon-never-mind-the-toddlers-and-tiaras-child-sexualisation-is-all-around-us-29596619.html

Olding, M. and Zuckerman, D. (2004, 26 October) 'Cosmetic surgery and teens', *The Washington Post*. Available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A63931-2004Oct26.html

Olfman, S. (ed.) (2009) *The sexualization of childhood*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

O'Mahony, K. (2013, 8 November) 'Grand Theft of their innocence', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/features/grand-theft-of-their-innocence-248898.html

O'Neill, B. and Dinh, T. (2012) *Irish Kids Online: Comparing Youth and Parent Perspectives*, Digital Childhood Working Paper Series (No. 1). Dublin: Dublin Institute of Technology.

O'Neill, B. and Dinh, T. (2014) *Net Children Go Mobile: Initial Findings from Ireland.* Dublin: Dublin Institute of Technology.

O'Neill, B. and Dinh, T. (2015) *Net Children Go Mobile: Full Findings from Ireland.* Dublin; Dublin Institute of Technology.

O'Neill, B., Grehan, S. and Olafsson, K. (2011) *Risks and safety for children on the Internet: The Ireland Report.* London: EU Kids Online, London School of Economics (LSE). Available at: http://www.Internetsafety.ie/website/ois/oisweb.nsf/0/0234B716E9BDC62580257831004336F0/$File/Full%20Report.pdf

Oppliger, P.A. (2008) *Girls gone skank: The sexualization of girls in American culture.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company.

Opree, S.J., Buijzen, M. and Valkenburg, P.M. (2012) 'Lower life satisfaction related to materialism in children frequently exposed to advertising', *Pediatrics*, Vol. 130, No. 3, pp. e486-e491.

O'Sullivan, C. (2011a, 8 July 2011) 'Teens not all talk when it comes to sex', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/viewpoints/analysis/teens-not-all-talk-when-it-comes-to-sex-160319.html

O'Sullivan, C. (2011, 9 July 2011) 'Out of Control', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/viewpoints/analysis/out-of-control-160586.html

O'Sullivan, C. (2011b, 11 July 2011) 'Growing pains for teens and parents', *Irish Examiner*. http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/growing-pains-for-teens-and-parents-160715.html

O'Sullivan, C. (2013, 22 August) 'Slane incident highlights ignorance of online privacy pitfalls', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/analysis/slane-incident-highlights-ignorance-of-online-privacy-pitfalls-240609.html

O'Sullivan, T. (2007) 'Get Media Smart®: A critical discourse analysis of controversy around advertising to children in the UK', *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 293-314.

Pan European Game Information (PEGI) (2011) *Enforcement Committee Rulings 2011.* Belgium: Pan European Game Information.

Papadopoulos, L. (2010) *Sexualisation of Young People: Review.* London: Home Office. Available at: http://codexproject.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/sexualisation-of-young-people-2010.pdf

Pardun, C.J., L'Engle, K.L. and Brown J.D. (2005) 'Linking exposure to outcomes: Early adolescents' consumption of sexual content in six media', *Mass Communication and Society*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 75-91.

Paul, B. and D.G. Linz (2004) 'Testing the effects of exposure to virtual child pornography on viewer cognitions and attitudes toward deviant sexual behaviour', *Dissertation Abstracts International*, Vol. 64, No. 8A, pp. 2693A

Pedersen, S. and Smithson, J. (2013) 'Mothers with Attitude – How the Mumsnet Parenting Forum offers space for new forms of femininity to emerge online', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 38, pp. 97-106.

Penny, L. (2014, 3 January) 'David Cameron's Internet Porn Filter is the Start of Censorship Creep', *The Guardian.* Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/03/david-cameron-internet-porn-filter-censorship-creep

Peter, J. and Valkenburg, P.M. (2007) 'Adolescents' exposure to a sexualized media environment and their notions of women as sex objects', *Sex Roles*, Vol. 56, No. 5, pp. 381-95.

Peter, J. and Valkenburg, P.M. (2006) 'Adolescents' exposure to sexually explicit online material and recreational attitudes towards sex', *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 56, No.4, pp. 639-60.

Peter, J. and Valkenburg, P.M. (2012) 'Do questions about watching Internet pornography make people watch Internet pornography? A comparison between adolescents and adults', *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 400-10.

Phoenix, A. (2011) *Review of recent literature for the Bailey Review of commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood.* London: Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre. Available at: http://www.cwrc.ac.uk/projects/documents/CWRC_commercialisationsexualisation_review_final_WP_No_2.pdf

PhonePay Plus (2013) *Code of Practice and Guidelines.* London: PhonePay Plus. Available at https://www.phonepayplus.org.uk/for-business/guidance-and-compliance-for-the-13th-code-of-practice

Pilcher, J. (2010) 'What not to wear? Girls, clothing and "showing" the body', *Children & Society*, Vol. 24, No. 6, pp. 461-70.

Pole, C., Boden, S., Edwards, T. and Pilcher, J. (2005) *New consumers: Children. Fashion and consumption, End of Award Report.* Swindon: Economic and Social Research Council.

Platt Liebau, C. (2007) *Prude: How the sex-obsessed culture damages girls (and America too!).* New York: Hachette Book Group.

Plogell, M. and Sundström, J. (2004) 'Advertising to Children in Sweden: Legal Briefing', *Young Consumers: Insight and Ideas for Responsible Marketers*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 66-68.

Pomerantz, S. (2008) *Girls, style and school identities: Dressing the part.* New York: Palgrave Macmillian.

Post Reporter (2013, 21 March) '2013's First Communion kids will net average €455', *Daily Business Post.* Available at: http://www.businesspost.ie/#!story/Home/News/2013's+First+Communion+kids+will+net+average+%E2%82%AC455/id/19410615-5218-514b-23eb-7ccfc3620433

Power, J. (2014) *AAI/NIELSEN Barometer Monitoring Advertising Expenditure in Ireland*, Q4 2013. Dublin: Association of Advertisers in Ireland.

Preston, C. (2000) 'Are children seeing through ITC advertising regulations?', *International Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 117-36.

Price, R. (2013, 22 October) 'Reviewed: Grand Theft Auto V, Rayman Legends', *Irish Independent*. Available at: http://www.independent.ie/business/technology/gaming/reviewed-grand-theft-auto-v-rayman-legends-29686587.html

Prince, D. and Martin, N. (2012) 'The Tween Consumer Market Model: Significant variables and recommended research hypothesis', *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 31-45.

Pugh, A. (2009) *Longing and Belonging: Parents, Children and Consumer Culture. Berkeley*, CA: University of California Press.

Rantala, L. (2011) 'Finnish Media Literacy Education Policies and Best Practices in Early Childhood Education and Care since 2004', *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 123-33. Available at: http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/jmle/vol3/iss2/7/

Reay, D. and Lucey, H. (2002) ' "I don't really like it here, but I don't want to be anywhere else": Children and Inner City Council Estates', *Antipode*, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 410-28.

Renold, E. (2013) *Boys and Girls Speak Out: A Qualitative Study of children's gender and sexual cultures (age 10-12) for the National Assembly for Wales Cross-Party Group on Children, Sexualities, 'Sexualisation' and Equalities.* Cardiff: Cardiff University.

Retail Ireland (2011) *Retail Ireland Childrenswear Guidelines*. Dublin: Retail Ireland. Available at: http://www.retailireland.ie/Sectors/RI/RI.nsf/vPages/Retail_in_Ireland~Responsible_Retailing~childrenswear/$file/RETAIL+IRELAND+CHILDRENSWEAR+GUIDELINES.pdf

Renold, E. and Ringrose, J. (2011) 'Schizoid subjectivities? Re-theorizing teen girls' sexual cultures in an era of "sexualization" ', *Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 47, No. 4, pp. 389-409.

Ridge, T. (2007) 'It's a family affair: Low-income children's perspectives on maternal work', *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 399-416.

Ring, E. (2013, 7 November) 'Teens keep parents in dark over online activity', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/teens-keep-parents-in-dark-over-online-activity-248758.html

Ringrose, J. (2010) 'Sluts, Whores, Fat Slags and Playboy Bunnies: Teen girls' negotiations of "sexy" on social networking sites and at school'. In: C. Jackson, C. Paechter and E. Renold (eds.), *Girls and Education 3-16: Continuing Concerns, New Agendas*. Basingstoke: Open University Press.

Ringrose, J., Gill, R., Livingstone, S. and Harvey, L. (2012) *A Qualitative Study of Children, Young People and 'Sexting': A Report prepared for the NSPCC, England.* London: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

Roberts, J.A. and Jones, E. (2001) 'Money attitudes, credit card use and compulsive buying among American college students', *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, Vol. 35, No. 21, pp. 213-40.

Roberton, M.A. and Halverson, L.E. (1984) *Developing children: Their changing movements*. New York: Lea and Febiger.

Robinson, K.H. (2008) 'In the Name of "Childhood Innocence": A Discursive Exploration of the moral panic associated with childhood and sexuality', *Cultural Studies Review*, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 113-29.

Robinson, K.H. (2013) *Innocence, Knowledge, and the Construction of Childhood: The contradictory nature of sexuality and censorship in children's contemporary lives*. New York: Routledge.

Rose, C. (2010) *Making, selling and wearing boys' clothes in Late Victorian England*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Rozendaal, E., Buijzen, M. and Valkenburg, P. (2011) 'Children's Understanding of Advertisers' Persuasive Tactics', *International Journal of Advertising: The Review of Marketing Communications*, Vol. 30, No. 2, pp. 329-50.

Rush, E. (2009) 'What are the risks of premature sexualisation for children?'. In: M. Tankard Reist (ed.), *Getting real: Challenging the sexualisation of girls*. Melbourne: Spinifex Press (pp. 41-54).

Rush, E. and La Nauze, A. (2006a) *Corporate Paedophilia: Sexualisation of children in Australia*, Discussion Paper No. 90. Canberra: The Australian Institute. Available at: http://www.tai.org.au/documents/dp_fulltext/DP90.pdf

Rush, E. and La Nauze, A. (2006b) *Letting Children be Children: Stopping the sexualisation of children in Australia*, Discussion Paper No. 93. Canberra: The Australian Institute. Available at: http://www.tai.org.au/documents/downloads/DP93.pdf

Rutherford, V. (2015) 'Technologies of Gender and Girlhood: Doll Discourses in Ireland, 1801-1909'. In: M. Forman-Brunell and J.D. Whitney (eds), *Dolls Studies: The Many Meanings of Dolls' Toys and Play*. New York: Peter Lang (pp. 103-20).

Ryan, L. (2002) 'Sexualising Emigration: Discourses on Irish female migration in the 1930s', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 51-65.

Ryan, S. (2011, 8 June) 'Bringing lads' mags to heel is a start in battle to protect our children', *Herald.ie*. Available at: http://www.herald.ie/opinion/columnists/sinead-ryan/sinead-ryan-bringing-lads-mags-to-heel-is-a-start-in-battle-to-protect-our-children-27981747.html

Rysst, M. (2010) ' "I am only 10 years old": Femininities, clothing-fashion codes and the intergenerational gap of interpretation of young girls' clothes', *Childhood*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 76-93.

Scherper-Hughes, N. (2001) *Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics: Mental illness in rural Ireland*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Schooler, D. and Ward, L.M. (2006) 'Average joes: Men's relationships with media, real bodies, and sexuality', *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, Vol. 7, pp. 27-41.

Scott, S., Jackson, S. and Backett-Milburn, K. (1998) 'Swings and Roundabouts: Risk anxiety and the everyday worlds of children', *Sociology*, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 689-705.

Segal, J.Z. (2010) 'The view from here and there: objectivity and the rhetoric of breast cancer', Paper presented at the 'Scientific Objectivity Conference on Situating Science', Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, 17-20 June 2010.

Segercrantz, M. and Laes, S. (2013) 'Advertising to children in Finland', *Young Consumers: Insight and Ideas for Responsible Marketers*, Vol. 14, No. 2. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/yc.2013.32114baa.001

Seiter, E. (1993) *Sold Separately: Children and Parents in Consumer Culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee (2011) *Review of the National Classification Scheme: Achieving the Right Balance*. Canberra: Government of Australia.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts (2008) *Sexualisation of Children in the Contemporary Media*. Canberra: Government of Australia. Available at: http://www.aph.gov.au/binaries/senate/committee/eca_ctte/sexualisation_of_children/report/report.pdf

Shanahan, C. (2013, 4 March) 'Ban Smart Phones and Social Networks in Schools', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/ban-smart-phones-and-social-networks-in-schools-224401.html

Sharma, A. (2011) 'Role of Family in Consumer Socialization of Children: Literature Review', *Researchers World Journal of Arts, Science & Commerce*, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 161-67.

Sheehan, A. (2012, 10 December) 'Irish parents to spend most in Europe on Christmas toys', *Irish Independent*. Available at: http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/irish-parents-to-spend-most-in-europe-on-christmas-toys-28945609.html

Simpson, L., Douglas, S. and Schimmel, J. (1998) 'Tween Consumers: Catalog Clothing Purchase Behavior', *Adolescence*, Vol. 33, No. 131, pp. 637-44.

Skeggs, B. (1997) *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*. London: Sage.

Sóle, E. (2013, 19 April) 'What's not to like about being a millionaire?', *Irish Examiner*. Available at: http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/whats-not-to-like-about-being-a-millionaire-228765.html

Staksrud, E. (2013) *Children in the Online World: Risk, Regulation and Rights. Farnham*, Surrey: Ashgate [Ebook].

Statham, J., Mooney, A. and Phoenix, A. (2011) *Summary of Regulatory Frameworks in four selected countries, for the Bailey Review of Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood*. London: Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre. Available at: http://www.cwrc.ac.uk/projects/documents/DfE_Review_international_regulatory_frameworks_final_WP_No_5.pdf

Stice, E. and Shaw, H. (2003) 'Prospective relations on body image, eating, and affective disturbances to smoking onset in adolescent girls: How Virginia slims', *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 71, pp. 129-35.

Sugrue, K. (2002) 'Sex in the City'. In: M.P. Corcoran and M. Peillon (eds.), *Ireland Unbound: A Turn of the Century Chronicle*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration (pp. 51-62).

Sutherland, A. and Thompson, B. (2001) *Kidfluence: Why Kids Today Mean Business* (1st edition). Ontario: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Suoninen, A. and Finnish Youth Research Society (2013) *Children's Media Barometer 2013. Media uses of 0-8 year-old children and changes in media uses since 2010: Summary*. Helsinki: Finnish Youth Research Society. Available at: http://www.nuorisotutkimusseura.fi/julkaisuja/childrens_media_barometer_2013.pdf

Sweeting, H., Hunt, K. and Bhaskar, A. (2012) 'Consumerism and well-being in early adolescence', *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 6, pp. 802-20.

Sweney, M. (2013, 19 November) 'TV Gambling Ads have risen 600% since law change', *The Guardian.*

The I in Online (2011) *Children and Online Privacy Survey.* Dublin: The I in Online.

Thompson, K. (2010) 'Because looks can be deceiving: Media alarm and the sexualisation of childhood – do we know what you mean?', *Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp. 395-400.

Thompson, L. and Donaghue, N. (2014) 'The Confidence Trick: Competing constructions of confidence and self-esteem in young Australian women's discussions of the sexualisation of culture', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 47, pp. 23-35.

Thompson, E.S., Laing, A.W. and McKee, L. (2007) 'Family purchase decision-making: Exploring child influence behaviour', *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 182-202.

Tiggemann, M. and Lynch, J.E. (2001) 'Body image in adult women across the life span: The role of self-objectification, *Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 243-53.

Tiggemann, M. and Slater, A. (2001) 'A test of objectification theory in former dancers and non-dancers', *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 57-64.

TMAP (2009/10) *Teenage Magazine Arbitration Panel, Annual Report.* London: Periodical Publishers Association Limited.

Tobacco Policy Review Group (2013) *Tobacco Free Ireland*. Dublin: Department of Health. Available at: http://www.drugs.ie/resourcesfiles/ResearchDocs/Ireland/2013/tobacco-free-ireland.pdf

Tolman, D.L., Impett, E.A.,Tracy, A.J. and Michael, A. (2006) 'Looking good, sounding good: Femininity, ideology and adolescent girls' mental health', *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol. 30, pp. 85-95.

Tolonen, T. (2013) 'Youth Cultures, Lifestyles and Social Class in Finnish Contexts', *Young*, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 55-75.

Trentmann, F. (2009) 'Crossing Divides: Consumption and globalisation in history', *Journal of Consumer Culture*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 187-220.

Turner, J.J., Kelly, J. and McKenna, K. (2006) 'Food for thought: Parents' perspectives of child influence', *British Food Journal*, Vol. 108, No. 3, pp. 181-91.

Twomey, O. (2014) 'Marketing Communications and Children – What Rules?', Unpublished Paper presented at the 'Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Children Conference', University College Cork, 28-29 April 2014.

UNICEF Office of Research (2013) *Child Well-being in Rich Countries: A Comparative Overview*, Innocenti Report Card 11. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research.

UPC (2007) *UPC European Television Survey 2007: Role of TV for households with children*. Rotterdam: Research International.

Valdivia, A.N. (2011) 'Building a Feminist Trajectory', *Communication, Culture & Critique*, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp. 335-60.

Valkenburg, P.M. and Buijzen, M. (2005) 'Identifying determinants of young children's brand awareness: Television, parents, and peers', *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 26, No. 4, pp. 456-68.

Valkenburg, P.M. and Peter, J. (2013) 'Five Challenges for the Future of Media-Effects Research', *International Journal of Communication*, Vol. 7, pp. 197-215.

Valiulis, M., O'Driscoll, A. and Redmond, J. (2007) *An Introduction to Gender Equality Issues in the Marketing and Design of Goods to Children*. Dublin: The Equality Authority.

Vanwesenbeeck, I. (2009) 'The risks and rights of sexualization: An appreciative commentary on Lerum and Dworkin's "Bad Girls Rule" ', *Journal of Sex Research*, Vol. 46, No. 4, pp. 268-70.

Vares, T. and Jackson, S. (2010) 'Preteen girls read "tween" popular culture: A contribution to the "Sexualization of Girlhood" debate', Unpublished Paper presented at 4th International Conference on 'Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Child and Teen Consumption', Norrköping, Sweden, 21-23 June 2010.

Vickers, G. (2008) *Chasing Lolita: How popular culture corrupted Nabokov's little girl all over again*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press.

Vogel, B.L. (2000) 'Correlates of pre-college males' sexual aggression: Attitudes, beliefs and behaviour', *Women and Criminal Justice*, Vol. 11, pp. 25-47.

Walton, J. (2012) *National Pre-School Nutrition Survey: Summary Report on Food Nutrient Intakes, Physical Measurements and Barriers to Healthy Eating*. Dublin: Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance (IUNA). Available at: http://www.iuna.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Summary_Report_National_PreSchool_ Nutrition_Survey_June_2012.pdf

Ward, S. (1974) 'Consumer Socialization', *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 1-14.

Wartella, E., Rideout, V., Lauricella, A. and Connell, S. (2013) *Parenting in the Age of Digital Technology: A National Survey*. Evanston, IL: Center on Media and Human Development, School of Communication, Northwestern University. Available at: http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static /f/1083077/22839022/1370380073813/PARENTING_IN_THE_AGE_OF_DIGITAL_TECHNOLOGY.pd f?token=Wfbe6q2qgvl87Fh8UIKd4V4rIm0%3D

Wayman, S. (2012, 16 October) 'Small children mean big business for advertisers', *The Irish Times*. Available at: http://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/health-family/small-children-mean-big-business-for- advertisers-1.553229

Webb, R. and Associates (1999) *Public Policy on Children's Play in Ireland: An examination of central and local Government policies on children's play in public areas*. Dublin: Dublin Institute of Technology, Centre for Social and Educational Research, and Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin. Available at: https://www.tcd.ie/childrensresearchcentre/assets/pdf/Publications/childrens_play.pdf

Webwise (2012) *Safer Internet Day 2012: Survey of Parents' Attitudes*. Dublin: Webwise. Available at: http://www.webwise.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/NPCSurveyNarrative.pdf

Weeks, J. (2007) *The World We Have Won: The Remaking of Erotic and Intimate Lives*. Abingdon: Routledge.

West, P., Sweeting, H., Young, R. and Robins, M. (2006) 'A Material Paradox: Socioeconomic status, young people's disposable income and consumer culture', *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 4, pp. 437-62.

Whelan, F. (2013, 9 December) 'Grand Theft Auto V wins big at VGX', *Irish Independent*. Available at: http://www.independent.ie/business/technology/gaming/grand-theft-auto-v-wins-big-at-vgx-29822151.html

Willett, R. (2008) 'What you wear tells a lot about you: Girls dress up online, *Gender and Education*, Vol. 20, No. 5, pp. 421-34.

Williams, J., Greene, S., McNally, S., Murray, A. and Quail, A. (2009) *Growing up in Ireland: The Lives of 9-Year-Olds*. Dublin: Government Publications.

Williams, J., Greene, S., McNally, S., Murray, A. and Quail, A. (2011a) *Growing up in Ireland. Key Findings: Infant Cohort (at 3 years) – No 3: Economic and Financial Circumstances among families of 3-year-olds*. Dublin: Government Publications.

Williams, J., Greene, S., McNally, S., Murray, A. and Quail A. (2011b) *Growing up in Ireland. Key Findings: Infant Cohort (at 3 years) – No. 1: The Health of 3-year-olds*. Dublin: Government Publications.

Williams, J., Greene, S., McNally, S., Murray, A. and Quail, A. (2012a) *Growing up in Ireland. Key Findings: 13-year-olds – No. 4: The Lives of 13-year-olds: Their Relationships, Feelings and Behaviours*. Dublin: Government Publications.

Williams, J., Greene, S., McNally, S., Murray, A. and Quail, A. (2012b) *Growing up in Ireland. Key Findings: 13-year-olds – No. 3: The Family and Financial Circumstances of 13-year-olds*. Dublin: Government Publications.

Williams, J., Greene, S., McNally, S., Murray, A. and Quail, A. (2013) *Growing up in Ireland. Key Findings: Infant Cohort (at 5 years) – No. 4: The Family Circumstances of 5-year-olds*. Dublin. Dublin: Government Publications.

Williams, Z. (2006) *Commercialisation of Childhood*. London: Compass. Available at:
http://www.compassonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/thecommercialisationofchildhood.pdf

Williams, Z. (2013, 24 January) 'Our children's enemy is sexism, not sexualisation', *The Guardian*. Available at:
http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jan/24/children-enemy-sexism-not-sexualisation

Willsher, R. (2012, 12 February) 'French report calls for end to sexualisation of children', *The Guardian*. Available
at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/mar/06/french-report-sexualisation-of-children

Wilska, T. and Pedrozo, S. (2007) 'New Technology and Young People's Consumer Identities: A comparative
study between Finland and Brazil', *Young*, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 343-68.

Wilska, T. (2005) 'Gender Differences in the Consumption of Children and Young People in Finland', Paper
presented at the 7th ESA Conference, 'Rethinking Inequalities', 9-12 September 2005, Torun, Poland.
Available at: http://www.google.ie/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&
uact=8&sqi=2&ved=0CCQQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fsifo.no%2Ffiles%2FWilska.pdf&ei=ISj7U6-
fAqHT7AanrICYDQ&usg=AFQjCNHz3f0X4_UmyEu55-xEa63QVDrAOQ&sig2=3lPAYo4VHGnKm6qx
X3mKbQ&bvm=bv.73612305,d.ZGU

Wiseman, E. (2013, 1 September) 'The Slane Girl Twitter scandal proves that women can't make mistakes',
The Guardian. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2013/sep/01/slane-girl-twitter-
scandal-women

WHO (2014) *Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI): MPOWER brochures and other resources*. Geneva: World Health
Organization. Available at: http://www.who.int/tobacco/mpower/publications/en_tfi_mpower_
brochure_m.pdf?ua=1

Appendices

Appendix 1: Profile of parent participants

	File name	Pseudonym	No. of children	Children's ages and gender
1.	Indiv Int East 17.06.13	Rebecca	2	12 (M) 2 (F)
2.	Indiv Int East 17.06.13	Ross	1	9 (F)
3.	Indiv Int East 19.06.13	Sally	2	1½ (F) 4½ (M)
4.	Indiv Int East 19.06.13	Andrea	2	10 (M) 9 (F)
5.	Indiv Int East 19.06.13	Emily	3	14 (F) 6 (F) 4 (M)
6.	Indiv Int East Sept 2013	Justine	3	14 (M) 11 (F) 6 (F)
7.	Indiv Int East Sept 2013	Margaret	3	14 (M) 14 (M) 9 (F)
8.	Indiv Int East Sept 2013	Suzanne	5	17 (M) 16 (M) 15 (F) 12 (F) 9 (F)
9.	Indiv Int East Sept 2013	Judith	2	21 (F) 13 (F)
10.	Indiv Int East Sept 2013	Karen	1	13 (F)
11.	Indiv Int East Sept 2013	Marie	4	2 x F, 2 x M Age range: 11-17
12.	Indiv Int East Sept 2013	Charlotte	3	1 (F) 4 (F) 6 (F)
13.	Indiv Int Midwest 11.06.13	Nora	3	19 (M) 18 (F) 14 (M)
14.	Indiv Int Midwest 21.09.13	Claire	2	15 (F) 9 (M)
15.	Indiv Int Midwest 28.06.13	Lucy	2	17 (F) 14 (M)
16.	Indiv Int South 01.08.13	Linda	2	13 (M) 10 (M)
17.	Indiv Int South 10.06.13	Lydia	4	26 (M) 23 (F) 14 (M) 9 (F)
18.	Indiv Int South 23.07.13	Miriam	2	10 (F) 11 (F)
19.	Indiv Int South 24.07.13	Julia	2	9 (M) 8 (F)
20.	Indiv Int South 26.06.13	Janice	2	17 (M) 9 (F)

	File name	Pseudonym	No. of children	Children's ages and gender
21.	Indiv Int South 26.06.13 i	Nicola	3	15 (F) 13 (F) 8 (F)
22.	Indiv Int West 30.05.13	Jennifer	3	19 (M) 14 (M) 11 (F)
23.	Indiv Int West 30.05.13 i	Matilda	3	7 (M) 6 (M) 3 (F)
24.	Indiv Int West 31.05.13	Georgia	1	7 (M)
25.	Indiv Int West 31.05.13	Annette	7	15 (F) 13 (F) 11 (F) 9 (F) 8 (M) 6 (M) 4 (F)
26.	Pair Interview South 12.06.13	Niamh	2	6 (M) 4 (F)
27.	Pair Interview South 12.6.13	Phoebe	3	5 (F) 3 (F) 22 months (F)
28.	Couple East Sept 2013	Christine	3	17 (M) 15 (F) 13 (M)
29.	Couple East Sept 2013	Toby	3	17 (M) 15 (F) 13 (M)
30.	Couple East Sept 2013	Therese	3	4 (M) 7 (M) 9 (M)
31.	Couple East Sept 2013	Donal	3	4 (M) 7 (M) 9 (M)
32.	Couple MidWest 19.09.13 2013	Orla	2	10 (F) 7 (F)
33.	Couple MidWest 19.09.13 2013	Stephen	2	10 (F) 7 (F)
34.	Couple West 31.05.13	Sorcha	3	6 (M) 4 (M) 1 (F)
35.	Couple West 31.05.13	Fiachra	3	6 (M) 4 (M) 1 (F)
36.	Couple West Sept 2013	Dermot	3	14 (M) 11 (M) 10 (F)
37.	Couple West Sept 2013	Angela	3	14 (M) 11 (M) 10 (F)

	File name	Pseudonym	No. of children	Children's ages and gender
38.	Focus Group East 18.06.13	Pauline	3	17 (F) 14 (F) 12 (F)
39.	Focus Group East 18.06.13	Doug	2	15 (M) 13 (F)
40.	Focus Group East 18.06.13	Martina	3	13 (F) 10 (F) 10 (F)
41.	Focus Group East 18.06.13	Kay	2	12 (F) 17 (F)
42.	Focus Group East 18.06.13	Elizabeth	2	8 (M) 5 (F)
43.	Focus Group East 18.06.13	Monica	2	14 (F) 6 (F)
44.	Focus Group East 18.06.13	Rachel	3	21 (F) 18 (F) 13 (F)
45.	Focus Group East 18.06.13	Aoife	2	13 (F) 12 (M)
46.	Focus Group East 18.06.13	Freda	2	3 (F) 5 (F)
47.	Focus Group Midlands Sept 2013	Una	2	11 (F) 14 (F)
48.	Focus Group Midlands Sept 2013	Ella	2	13 (M) 15 (M)
49.	Focus Group Midlands Sept 2013	Emma	3	16 (F) 13 (M) 11 (M)
50.	Focus Group Midlands Sept 2013	Ivy	4	12 (F) 10 (F) 9 (F) 6 (M)
51.	Focus Group Midlands Sept 2013	Joan	2	9 (F) 7 (M)
52.	Focus Group Midlands Sept 2013	Caroline	4	14 (F) 12 (M) 9 (F) 7 (M)
53.	Focus Group Midlands Sept 2013	Ciara	4	16 (M) 14 (F) 12 (F) 9 (M)
54.	Focus Group South 10.06.13	Denise	2	11 (M) 12 (F)
55.	Focus Group South 10.06.13	Naomi	1	14 (F)
56.	Focus Group South 10.06.13	Cathy	1 (current foster child)	10 (M)
57.	Focus Group South 10.06.13	Martin	3	14 (M) 13 (F) 11 (F)
58.	Focus Group South 10.06.13	Stacy	2	15 (M) 13 (F)

continued

	File name	Pseudonym	No. of children	Children's ages and gender
59.	Focus Group South 10.06.13	Ruth	3	15 (F) 12 (F) 10 (M)
60.	Focus Group South 10.06.13	Louise	2	17 10 (gender not specified)
61.	Focus Group South 24.07.13	Saoirse	3	14 (F) 12 (M) 5 (M)
62.	Focus Group South 24.07.13	Diarmuid	3	14 (F) 12 (M) 5 (M)
63.	Focus Group South 24.07.13	Isabelle	4	25 (F) 19 (F) 16 (M) 14 (M)
64.	Focus Group South 24.07.13	Maeve	2	7 (F) 5 (F)
65.	Focus Group South 26.09.13	Sadhbh	4	2 x M, 2 x F (not specified). Ages: 19 14 10 10
66.	Focus Group South 26.09.13	Hannah	Not provided	Not provided
67.	Focus Group South 26.09.13	Jacinta	Not completed	Not completed
68.	Focus Group South 26.09.13	Ruby	3	16 (M) 12 (M) 7 (F)
69.	Focus Group South 26.09.13	Frances	1	15 (F)
70.	Focus Group South 26.09.13	Edel	4	18 (F) 22 (F) 25 (F) 27 (F)
71.	Focus Group South 26.09.13	Teresa	2	9 (M) 7 (M)
72.	Focus Group South 26.09.13	Doreen	1	15 (M)
73.	Focus Group South 26.09.13	Arlene	3	15 (F) 13 (F) 9 (F)
74.	Focus Group West 02.09.13	Susie	3	8 (M) 4 (M) Almost 2 (M)
75.	Focus Group South 26.09.13	Leona	1	12 (M)
76.	Focus Group South 26.09.13	Triona	2	3 4½ (gender not specified)
77.	Individual Interview West	Mark	Not provided	Not completed
78.	Individual Interview South	Rose	2	M and F (ages not specified)

Appendix 2: Information sheet on research project

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are writing to inform you about a project being undertaken by a team of researchers at University College Cork and Dublin City University entitled *The commercialisation and sexualisation of children in Ireland: an exploratory study.* The study is being funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Primarily, the research is concerned with exploring parental ideas and views about the commercial influences on children, and their thoughts on whether children in Ireland are being sexualised and in what particular ways. It is also focused on reviewing policy and practice responses to these issues in Ireland and in other contexts. The interdisciplinary Research Team comprises Dr Elizabeth Kiely, Dr Máire Leane (both School of Applied Social Studies, UCC), Dr Karl Kitching (School of Education, UCC), Dr Debbie Ging (School of Communications, DCU) and research assistant Dr Gill Harold (School of Applied Social Studies, UCC).

In this research, we wish to explore parents' views on children's engagement in consumer activity and their opinions on the impact of sexualisation on their children's lives. Similar studies carried out elsewhere have indicated that parents' voices are often excluded from debates on these issues. In this research, we wish to engage directly with parents and guardians to discuss with them their views on these topics. A report will be completed for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs on all aspects of the research project. This will include findings and recommendations based on the findings obtained.

We wish to invite parents and guardians to share their views with us by participating in focus group settings or in individual and couple interviews. These research meetings will be organised in **Cork, Dublin, Limerick and Galway (at a city and/or county venue)** and will take place during _____. They will be facilitated by members of the Research Team, who are all experienced researchers, and every effort will be made to enable your involvement should you wish to take part. *In the final research report or any related research output, participants' identities will not be disclosed and when quoting comments provided by participants, those persons' true identities will not be made known.*

If you are interested in participating in this research and would like to share your views, please complete the form below and return the information by post or e-mail at your earliest convenience to: Elizabeth Kiely, c/o School of Applied Social Studies, Donovan's Road, University College Cork. E-mail: e.kiely@ucc.ie; Tel: (021) 490 2634.

If you would like more information about the research project before making your decision to participate or not, please contact Gill Harold by telephone or e-mail g.harold@ucc.ie.

Name	
Address	
Telephone No.	Home: Mobile/Work:
E-mail address	

Preferred method of contact	Number of children	Their ages	Their gender
☐ Phone ☐ E-mail ☐ Post			

Please indicate (✔) your preference to attend a focus group or interview (individual/couple)		
☐ Focus group	☐ Interview (individual)	☐ Interview (couple)

Preferred location for participation					
☐ Cork	☐ Dublin	☐ Limerick	☐ Galway	☐ City	☐ County

Preferred time for participation		
☐ Morning	☐ Afternoon	☐ Evening

Appendix 3: Profile of young adult participants

	File name	Pseudonym	Age of participant	No. of siblings	Gender and age of siblings
1.	Focus Group 22/10/2013	Sinead	21	1	Female, 17
2.	Focus Group 22/10/2013	Elaine	22	1	Male, 22
3.	Focus Group 22/10/2013	Maeve	19	3	Female, 20 Female, 17 Male, 9
4.	Focus Group 22/10/2013	Gary	20	1	Female, 18
5.	Focus Group 19/11/2013	Ann	20	2	Female, 22 Female, 17
6.	Focus Group 19/11/2013	June	21	2	Male, 24 Female, 16
7.	Focus Group 19/11/2013	Daisy	21	4	Female, 36 Female, 30 Female, 28 Male, 26
8.	Focus Group	Eoin	19	*Not provided*	*Not provided*
9.	Focus Group	Fiona	20	*Not provided*	*Not provided*
10.	Focus Group 21/1/2014	Sarah	20	3	Male, 26 Male, 24 Female, 19
11.	Focus Group 21/1/2014	Alice	20	2	Male, 24 Male, 22
12.	Focus Group 21/1/2014	John	20	1	Male, 18

Appendix 4: Topic guide for focus groups and interviews

The commercialisation and sexualisation of children in Ireland:
an exploratory study

Introduction – Commercialisation and Sexualisation
1. What comes to mind when you hear terms like commercialisation, sexualisation and children?
2. Would you say that commercialisation is an issue of concern for you in relation to your children? Why/Why not?
3. Would you say that sexualisation is an issue that concerns you in relation to your children? Why?/Why not?
4. As a parent, where does commercialisation or sexualisation feature – high up or low down – in your list of concerns for you and your children?

Commercialisation
5. Do your children complain to you that their friends have more stuff and wish that you could afford to buy more for them?
6. Do your children only like to buy clothes with popular labels or does that matter to them at all if they see what they like, or do they actively resist buying brand names?
7. Do you think your child experiences and responds to pressures to adopt the same style of clothing and other trends as influenced by their peers?
8. In relation to material goods, to what extent do your children tune into what is the 'premium' product or not (e.g. the top of the range mobile phone/ipod, etc)?
9. How much is 'being cool' important to your children and are there particular things they want to have that they think can set them apart as being cool?
10. Do your children prefer to shop and to go to shopping centres than to engage in other kinds of leisure activities?
11. What brand names have you become familiar with only as a result of your children talking about them to you?
12. Is your child attached to any one particular brand of toys or products? What are the factors that you think were important in creating this attachment?
13. Are there certain brands of food that your child prefers over others? If so, what factors do you think influence this brand loyalty?
14. Can you name some of the possessions that your child has and values especially?
15. What would you perceive to be their most treasured possessions at present? Does this change regularly or not?
16. Are there forms of consumption/products bought by children or young people presently that you think are really in bad taste or make you as parents feel very uncomfortable?
17. Do children actively think and assess different issues with regard to their consumption or do you think that they are too passive as consumers, wanting what is trendy or what everybody else has?
18. Do you think your child benefits from having spending power or making decisions that relate to expenditure and purchasing? If yes, can you identify in what ways?
19. Do you give your child(ren) pocket money or not? If so, what do you give them per week? Is this allowance theirs to spend as they like or not? Does it have to be earned or is it just given unconditionally?
20. If your children received money for making their Communion, Confirmation or for another celebration (e.g. birthday), what happens in relation to that money and who is involved in the decision-making process?

21. Have you noticed instances where your children have demonstrated their scepticism of advertising, have been critical of it or have recognised how they are being targeted/manipulated in particular ways?
22. Have you any evidence of your children or their peers actively resisting commercial pressure/marketing targeted at them?

Sexualisation

23. If your child wants to dress in what you consider to be more sexualised or adult clothing, what is your reaction from the following: that it is a passing phase and nothing too much to worry about; that it is not permitted and no negotiation; that it is not permitted but you explain why; that you compromise on what is and is not permitted after negotiation; that it does not surprise you because it is a natural part of growing up to want to look more adult, more attractive or to use style and dress to be provocative/to shock.
24. Do you think it is your job to protect your children against harmful sexual influences? If yes, can you identify how you try to do this? If no, whose job is it, if anybody's?
25. Do you think the issues relating to sexualisation are gendered (are focused on the sexes in different ways) and if yes, in what ways do you think this is evident?
26. Do you think when issues related to sexualisation or commercialisation are discussed, that ideas or prejudices about children from different social class or ethnic backgrounds are evident or not?
27. Do you think you have seen potential negative effects on your children or their friends from sexualised media, advertising or products? Can you identify what you think are positive effects?
28. Last year [2012], Minister Fitzgerald launched Ireland's first *Childrenswear Guidelines*. Are you familiar with these guidelines? Do you think it is a positive way forward or not in terms of addressing concerns parents may have about inappropriate childrenswear? Have you witnessed any changes in retailing since these guidelines were introduced?

Sites of commercialisation/sexualisation

29. From your perspective, is the problem that sexualisation and commercialisation is now such a major part of the landscape of children's lives (that there is no escaping it) or is the problem that there are sites/settings which are particularly worrying in terms of how they are making sexual material available to children or targeting them as consumers?
30. Overall, how would you describe your approach as parents: one which shelters your children from sites where they may be exposed to commercial influences or sexualised material, or do you accept that they will be exposed and that you can help them better understand and critically consider what they are seeing and hearing in such sites?
31. Can you identify any marketing strategies that companies are or were using recently that you think are entirely inappropriate, unfair or unethical where you and your children are concerned?
32. Do you think physical sites and products (magazines, billboards, shop displays, etc) or online sites pose more challenges to you as parents in terms of your concerns for your children being exposed to commercial or inappropriate sexual content? Can you explain why?
33. Are there any traditional or new marketing strategies used to target your children that you think make it really difficult for you as parents to negotiate? (Examples: Presentation/packaging of food or other products, vending machines, in-school marketing strategies, positioning of products in shops, giveaways (e.g. toys with meals), celebrity-endorsed products, peer-to-peer marketing, advertisements sent to mobile phones, advertisements on the Internet, advertisements on TV.)
34. Have your children ever discussed with you seeing sexual images in magazines, online, sent to their phones or made available to them in other ways, which you were aware really troubled or concerned them?
35. Do you think it is possible for parents, or indeed other bodies, to police the Internet for marketing strategies targeting children?

Negotiations between you as parents and your children

36. Are these issues you talk about with your children: (a) commercialisation; (b) sexualisation? If you do, what is the conversation like?

37. As a parent, do you find it easy or difficult to communicate with your children when they wish to buy products that you have reservations about?

38. What strategies do both you and your child use in negotiations around their choices of what to buy? Are these strategies effective or not?

39. How do your children respond when you refuse to buy them something? (Examples: Do they get angry, pester, accept your decision readily, accept your decision after some time of pestering, refuse to cooperate with you on other issues, use bribery or manipulation to get what they want.)

40. Do you at times buy things for your children that you would rather not buy, but you do because you think they may lose their friends otherwise, or may feel excluded in their peer group?

41. Do you ever discuss pressures to buy and negotiating strategies with other parents/guardians?

42. Do you think your own consumption practices influence your children or not? Can you identify in what ways?

43. Do you try to encourage responsible spending among your children or do you let them decide on their own spending without your interference?

Regulation and making complaints

44. Have you ever made complaints about what you thought was inappropriate marketing targeting children or accessible to children? To whom did you complain and what was the outcome?

45. Would you consider complaining or not to some person (e.g. retailer/company) or agency (e.g. regulatory body) if you did see something that you thought inappropriate for children?

46. Do you know who you can complain to if you have concerns in this regard?

47. Do you agree or disagree that most companies, retailers, etc. do not cross the line in terms of marketing strategies aimed at children? Do you think that they are predominantly engaging in good practice or not in this area?

48. Are there sectors/sites that you think are responsible or effectively self-regulating where these issues and children are concerned?

49. Are there any particular types/sites of child consumption or sexualisation that you think are in need of more Government regulation? Which ones?

50. Do you think that you as parents in Ireland feel empowered enough or not to make complaints about these issues if they concern you, to have them taken seriously and to feel that it is worth your while to make a complaint?

School, education, media literacy, etc.

51. Do you think children are taught at school how to interpret and deal with advertising/marketing generally?

52. Are you aware if your children have participated in any kind of specific media literacy education (programmes or projects) in school or elsewhere to help them engage with the issues; to help them understand marketing for what it is and to become more saavy consumers? What did this education involve?

53. Do you think schools should do more to encourage or discourage commercialisation pressures/practices/activities among students?

54. Do you think, based on your experience, that schools as advertising/marketing sites are growing or not?

55. Are you aware if the school your child attends has or has not a policy on commercial sponsorship?

Your ideas for addressing these issues

56. Do you think as parents that you can offer a lot to your children by way of guidance/support around these issues or not?
57. To help your children grow up in a commercialised and sexualised culture, what supports do you think you need as parents, if any?
58. Are there any supports you would like for your children that you think they not getting at present?
59. If you are concerned about the issues of commercialisation and sexualisation, what would you like to see happen in Irish society to address them? Do you have any specific ideas yourself or do you favour any of the following:
    » More regulation in particular areas? If so, what areas?
    » More effective enforcement of existing regulation in areas? If so, what areas?
    » More guidance from experts in the field? If so, what kind?
    » More education for yourselves? If so, what kind?
    » More education for your children? At home/in school? If so, what kind?

Appendix 5: Consent form

**The commercialisation and sexualisation of children in Ireland:
an exploratory study**

This consent form is to check that you are happy with the information you have received about this study, that you are aware of your rights as a participant and to confirm that you wish to take part in the study.

1. Have you read all the information you have received about this study?

   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

2. Have you had sufficient opportunity to discuss further questions/concerns with a member of the Research Team?

   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

3. Have you received enough information about the study to make a decision as to whether you want to take part?

   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

4. Do you agree to be audio-recorded?

   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

5. Do you understand that you are free to refuse to answer any questions?

   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

6. Do you understand that you can withdraw from the study at any time up to **31 August 2013** without giving your reasons and that this will not affect you in any way?

   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

7. Do you have any particular requirements in relation to the study?

   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

8. Do you agree to take part in the study?

   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Name (*in capital letters please*): _____

I understand that information I give may be quoted or used in the research report, in publications, presentations and in other sources. I understand that the quotes will be used anonymously and that I will not be identified. I wish to proceed with this interview.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Name (*in capital letters please*): _____

Appendix 6: Focus group confidentiality agreement

Agreement for maintaining confidentiality in the focus group discussion

I hereby affirm that I will not communicate or in any manner disclose publicly information discussed during the course of this focus group discussion on the commercialisation and sexualisation of children in Irish society.

I agree not to talk about the material relating to the discussion with anyone outside of my fellow focus group members and moderator/researcher.

Name (*in capital letters please*): _____

Signature: _____

Name of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 7: Debrief sheet for focus groups and interviews

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Thank you for your participation in this research project funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs on **The commercialisation and sexualisation of children in Ireland**. We really appreciate your time and input.

If you have any concerns or questions about the research study or your participation in it, please do not hesitate to contact one of the Research Team, whose contact details are as follows:

Researcher	Contact	E-mail address	Telephone
Dr Elizabeth Kiely	School of Applied Social Studies, UCC	e.kiely@ucc.ie	021 490 2830
Dr Máire Leane	School of Applied Social Studies, UCC	m.leane@ucc.ie	021 490 2831
Dr Karl Kitching	School of Education, UCC	k.kitching@ucc.ie	021 490 2277
Dr Debbie Ging	School of Communications, DCU	debbie.ging@dcu.ie	01 700 7729
Dr Gill Harold	School of Applied Social Studies, UCC	g.harold@ucc.ie	021 490 2634

Below are the websites of the relevant Government departments and several Irish organisations/information and support networks, dedicated to engaging with **issues related to parenting and childhood in Ireland.** You may find that these offer useful resources in relation to your interest in the topic. We provide a list of these for your reference:

Department of Children and Youth Affairs, www.dcya.gov.ie
Children's Rights Alliance, www.childrensrights.ie
National Youth Council of Ireland, www.youth.ie
Barnardos, www.barnardos.ie
CARI (Children At Risk in Ireland), www.cari.ie
ISPCC (Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children), www.ispcc.ie
Office of the Ombudsman for Children, www.oco.ie
RollerCoaster, www.RollerCoaster.ie
Schooldays, www.schooldays.ie
Scoilnet, www.scoilnet.ie
Mummy Pages, www.mummypages.ie
Mumstown, www.mumstown.ie
Dad.ie, www.irishdads.ie
Parenting Support, www.parentingsupport.ie

We are also providing you with a list of the websites of the **main regulatory agencies in Ireland**, which monitor codes of practice in relation to advertising and marketing standards as they relate to children. These agencies also have provision for parents/guardians to make complaints about advertising, sales promotions directed at children or data protection and privacy issues which may be concerning them:

The Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland, www.asai.ie
Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, www.bai.ie
Retail Ireland, www.retailireland.ie
Irish Film Classification Office, www.ifco.ie
Office of the Data Protection Commissioner, www.dataprotection.ie

The following websites might also be of interest to you as they provide **information and resources for parents** in relation to video games and Internet safety:

Pan European Game Information (PEGI), www.pegi.info
Webwise, www.webwise.ie

Appendix 8: List of Dáil and Seanad debates cited in the study

Date	Speaker	Theme
02/04/1998	John O'Donoghue, Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Fianna Fáil); Dan Neville (Fine Gael)	Child Trafficking and Pornography Bill
27/02/2003	Brendan Ryan (Labour)	Suicide incidence statements
09/12/2003	David Norris (Independent)	Debate on child pornography on the Internet
09/12/2003	Dermot Ahern (Fianna Fáil)	Broadcasting
07/07/2005	Paul Gogarty (Green Party); Ms Nunan (Irish National Teachers Organisation)	Education and science debate
05/10/2005	Dr Wylie (Trinity College, Dublin)	Human trafficking presentations – Joint Committee on European Affairs Debate
02/06/2006	Brian Hayes (Fine Gael)	Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill
19/07/2006	Chairperson	Child protection
28/02/2007	Liz McManus (Labour)	Domestic violence
06/03/2007	Jim O'Keeffe (Fine Gael); Aengus Ó Snodaigh (Sinn Féin); Michael McDowell (Progressive Democrats); Peter Power (Fianna Fáil)	Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Bill
06/03/2007	Peter Power (Fianna Fáil)	Increased sexualisation of children; Sites of sexualisation; Parents' concerns
15/03/2007	Jennifer Kelly (Bodywhys)	Health and children debate; Children with behavioural problems (discussion with Bodywhys and the HSE)
22/03/2007	Brendan Ryan (Labour)	Debate on the reasons for youth suicide
21/11/2007	Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin (Sinn Féin)	Young people motion
23/07/2008	Alex White (Labour)	Constitutional Amendment on Children debate
01/10/2008	Fiona Neary (Rape Crisis Network)	Constitutional Amendment on Children debate (discussion with Rape Crisis Network Ireland)
02/10/2008	Liz McManus (Labour)	Broadcasting Bill
05/11/2008	Tom O'Malley (NUI Galway)	Constitutional Amendment on Children debate
03/02/2010	James Carroll (Fianna Fáil)	Headshops: Statements
21/04/2010	Fidelma Healy Eames (Fine Gael)	Order of Business
18/05/2010	Brendan Ryan (Labour)	Role of Broadcasting Authority of Ireland
19/05/2010	Sean Ó Fearghaíl (Fianna Fáil)	Constitutional Amendment on Children debate
07/10/2010	Sean Cottrell (Irish Primary Principals' Network)	Education and skills; primary level curriculum reform
05/07/2011	Aodhán Ó Ríordáin (Labour); Frances Fitzgerald (Fine Gael)	Written answers: Bailey Review
08/09/2011	Ruairi McKeirnan (Spunout.ie)	Health and children debate; Illegal drug use discussion
08/09/2011	Billy Kelleher (Fianna Fáil)	Health and children debate; Illegal drug use discussion

Date	Speaker	Theme
12/10/2011	Fidelma Healy Eames (Fine Gael)	Human trafficking and prostitution motion
15/12/2011	Aodhán Ó Ríordáin (Labour); Frances Fitzgerald (Fine Gael)	'Letting Children Be Children' study
29/02/2012	Paul Bradford (Fine Gael)	Child abuse motion
12/07/2012	Frances Fitzgerald (Fine Gael)	Health and children debate
27/09/2012	Sean Ó Feargháil (Fianna Fáil)	Amendment to the Constitution (Children) Bill
02/10/2012	Frances Fitzgerald (Fine Gael); Marie-Louise O'Donnell (Independent)	Amendment to the Constitution (Children) Bill
25/10/2012	Clare Daly (United Left); Frances Fitzgerald (Fine Gael); Barry Cowen (Fianna Fáil); Robert Troy (Fianna Fáil); Simon Harris (Fine Gael); Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin (Sinn Féin)	Written answers: Education; Body image; Retail guidelines; Advertising material targeted at children; Advertising and Internet regulation
25/10/2012	Mick Wallace (Independent); Frances Fitzgerald (Fine Gael)	*Childrenswear Guidelines*; Beauty pageants
12/12/2012	Marcella Corcoran Kennedy (Fine Gael)	Debate on pornography and prostitution

Appendix 9: Case studies of public 'concern'

Case Study 1: Media coverage of the Child Beauty Pageant

An 'American-style' child beauty pageant held in Castleblayney, Co Monaghan, on Saturday, 21 September 2013 sparked extensive media interest in print, online articles and television broadcasts and segments. The child beauty pageant, open to babies, toddlers and teens, was the first of its kind to be held in Ireland. Organised and hosted by Universal Royalty Beauty Pageants founder Annette Hill and her team of experts, the much publicised, controversial event generated widespread criticism at both a public and political level, with the debate largely played out in the media.

Although the topic of child beauty pageants has always been a popular talking point within Irish media, it was not until late May 2013, with confirmation from the Texas-based Universal Royalty Beauty Pageants that a child pageant was to take place in Ireland that September, that an abundance of print and online articles (40) were published on the topic and on the event. These articles, which can be classified into news-related articles (32) and opinion pieces (8), were widely published both before and after the event took place.

The language used throughout the news-related articles was informative and descriptive, albeit repetitive, with words such as 'controversial', 'controversy' and 'contested' dominating the majority of the articles. Although a small number of articles made reference to the opinions held by both advocates and opponents of child beauty pageants, a large number included only the opinions of those opposed to child pageantry. Quotes from children's watchdogs, children's psychologists, children's advocacy groups, Independent Senator and children's rights activist Jillian Van Turnhout, and Minster Frances Fitzgerald (then Minister for Children and Youth Affairs) were used throughout the articles to highlight the presumed dangers and negative long-term effects that child beauty pageants may have on young children and their development. Two articles were also published on 19 September 2013 discussing the banning of child beauty pageants for children under the age of 16 in France (Charlton (2013), *Irish Examiner*; Finn (2013), *Thejournal.ie*). These articles sought to highlight to readers the negative effects that child beauty pageants may have on young children and legal measures that could be taken to prevent child pageants taking place in Ireland in the future.

Less frequently, arguments were given in the articles in support of child beauty pageants. Although one of the main advocates for child beauty pageants, Annette Hill, is quoted in nearly all of the articles, only three articles explicitly quoted her supporting and defending the continuation and popularity of child beauty pageants.[24] Articles from the point of view of parents and successful child beauty pageant participants were also published in Irish newspapers (5). These articles highlighted the cost involved in child beauty pageants and the successful careers children may have if they are successful in winning titles at beauty pageants ('What's not to like about being a millionaire', Solé (2013), *Irish Examiner*). These articles, aimed at parents, sought to encourage them to enter their children, both girls and boys, in the pageants. A particular focus was placed on the economic benefits and opportunities to be gained from the pageants. In one article, it was reported that US child beauty pageant winner Eden Wood, advertised as the star attraction at the Irish pageant, was available for private coaching and offering tips on modelling and fashion techniques for an undisclosed amount (Bramhill (2013), *Irish Examiner*).

Television segments and documentaries also covered the topic. Most notable was the appearance of organisers and child beauty pageant participants on the *Late Late Show* and the documentary entitled *The Irish Child Pageant Storm*, which was aired on RTÉ on 25 November 2013. In the documentary, Annette Hill and her fellow pageant organisers were seen trying

---

[24] ' "Beauty pageants do not sexualise children" says contest organiser' (Finn (2013), *Thejournal.ie*), 'Dublin hotel cancels booking for child beauty pageant' (Kennedy and Bramhill (2013), *The Irish Times*) and 'Organiser of Irish pageant "can't understand what all the fuss is about" ' (Bramhill (2013), *Irish Examiner*).

to find a venue for the pageant after a number of already confirmed Irish hotels cancelled the booking once they became aware of the nature of the event. The documentary also showed the actual event, in which 20 participants took part in the child beauty pageant held in a beer garden of a public house in Castleblayney. However, both the documentary and the *Late Late Show* appearance were subject to criticism in Irish print and online media for giving children's pageants greater exposure. In the article 'Late Late warned over child pageants', Bramhill (2013) in the *Irish Examiner* utilised quotes from child psychologist Gillian Moore-Groarke, who stated that '*the more exposure that child pageants get in the media, the more popular they are likely to become and the more vulnerable children will be*'.

Numerous opinion pieces were also published on the topic of child beauty pageants and on the event in question. A common theme evident throughout the printed and online opinion pieces was that child beauty pageants promote the early sexualisation and objectification of children. The opinion pieces questioned parents' motives for entering their children into these beauty pageants and modern society for morally accepting a subculture which sees young children judged on their ability to dress and act like adults. In the article 'There's an ugly, dark side to Little Miss Sunshine', O'Hanlon (*Irish Independent*, 2013) equated the popular US television series *Toddlers and Tiaras* with child pornography, where images of young children dressed and acting in a sexualised, provocative way are portrayed on-screen. She asserted '*that it exists at all is a sad indictment of a dysfunctional society*'. She, along with many other opinion pieces, raised a concern about the implications of judging a child solely on their beauty and attractiveness, rather than on their intellect and talent. The authors reported in the articles that this largely affects children's feelings of self-worth, self-esteem and how they view their bodies. They also questioned how this affects one's views and understandings of femininity, childhood, societal expectations and beauty. Five of the articles used statistics and drew upon expert opinions to highlight the negative effects that child beauty pageants have on children's emotional and mental development. When referring to the child beauty pageant held in Ireland in 2013, a number of articles alerted readers to the secrecy surrounding the pageant and the venue. Although these aspects were mentioned in the news-related articles, they were further teased out in the opinion pieces as commentators elaborated on the implications that such secrecy has on children who take part in these pageants.

Although it is argued in the opinion pieces that child beauty pageants are largely responsible for the early sexualisation of children, two articles – 'Never mind the toddlers and tiaras, child sexualisation is all around us' (O'Hanlon (2013), *Irish Independent*) and 'Society is obsessed with pre-sexualised girls' (O'Connell (2013), *The Irish Times*) – presented child beauty pageants as merely a more overt manifestation of sexualisation as the wallpaper of children's lives. O'Connell (2013) in *The Irish Times* argues that society is also responsible for the early sexualisation and objectification of young girls due to the way we speak to them, address them and talk around them. In Irish public debate, the child beauty pageant has been and continues to be constructed as the dark side of the sexualisation of children. Women and mothers have been castigated for what is a female-led phenomenon. Solutions proffered vary from a legislative ban to the deployment of collective social disapproval directed at mothers who might put their children forward for such competitions, and at hotels that might host them. While the prospect of staging such a US-style event in Ireland made some journalists feel like they were living in an 'alien place' (O'Hanlon, 2013), for others it drew parallels with Irish dancing competitions and aspects of the sexual socialisation of girls more generally in Irish society (O'Mahony, 2013).

Case Study 2: Slane girl

On 17 August 2013, an incident involving a young teenage girl at an Eminem concert in Slane Castle generated much media publicity and diverse public opinion at both a national and international level. Unlike the media commentary surrounding the child beauty pageant (*see above*), in which nobody drew attention to the radically different social attitudes directed towards girls performing womanhood and boys performing manhood, the 'Slane girl' incident provoked a range of radically divergent attitudes in online and offline media about gender equity and male and female sexuality.

The incident involved photographs and videos of a young teenage girl giving oral sex to a male concert-goer being uploaded online and trending worldwide. This raised many questions and concerns in the media around personal privacy and how social media can enable exploitation and abuse. After these initial photographs and videos were taken down by social networking sites, a video of the girl kissing another male concert-goer was uploaded to YouTube. In the video, the girl, who was identified online by a friend, was seen to be verbally and physically abused by other concert-goers and encouraged to perform a sexual act on the young man she was with.

The incident first became known to the gardaí after the teenage girl sought medical assistance at the venue, having made a complaint about being sexually assaulted in a separate incident not depicted in the photographs and/or videos. The teenage girl was examined at a local sexual assault unit and blood tests were taken to determine whether her drink had been 'spiked'. It was reported that she was later hospitalised due to the stress of the images going viral and being shared by hundreds of people. Although the images and videos were immediately taken down and the personal accounts of those who shared the images permanently shut down, it is reported that links to these may still be available from other websites and from people who continue to re-post them. No criminal charges were filed by gardaí in relation to the incident, since no official complaint was made by the teenage girl (Horan (2013), *Sunday Independent*). Predominantly covered as a news story (16), a large number of opinion-based articles (12) were also published on the incident and on the negative aspects associated with social media and social networking sites.

News-related articles on the incident were published over a period of three months, from mid-August to the beginning of November 2013. Similar in approach, all of the news-related articles included details of the incident, brief details on the participants involved, details on how the photographs and videos went viral (and how they were subsequently taken down) and included the most up-to-date information on Garda investigations and lines of inquiry. The articles were written in an informative and descriptive way. Most commonly referred to in the articles as a 17-year-old secondary school student from the West of Ireland, a number of articles utilised the words 'distraught', 'unfortunate', 'sorry situation', 'extremely upset', 'devastated' and 'distressed' when referring to the girl and her family, evoking sympathy for both; one article published in late August stated that the family had not returned to their family home a week after the incident took place (Foy (2013), *Irish Independent*). In contrast, with the exception of reference to the items of clothing the two men in question were wearing, no further details were given on them. Only two articles specifically state that the men involved were not interviewed (Croffrey (2013), *Thejournal.ie*; Foy (2013), *Irish Independent*). Despite the repetition throughout the news-related articles, only one article entitled 'Gardaí await blood tests on sex act video girl' refers to the incident as 'a lewd act' rather than performing or engaging in a sexual act (Lally (2013), *The Irish Times*).

Although the age of the girl was explicitly stated in all of the Irish articles, it was only in two articles that what happened was framed as child sexual exploitation. For the purpose of comparison, English media articles discussing the incident were also reviewed for this study. These articles, which were mostly published in the tabloid newspapers, were seen to follow a similar format to Irish media articles. However, Gye (2013) in the *Daily Mail* used more sensationalist language to describe the events, stating '*after the girl's rise to fame, she was apparently left extremely distressed and embarrassed*', locating the blame with the girl by suggesting that it was her pursuit of celebrity status that caused her exploitation.

Shortly after the incident made the news headlines, opinion pieces began to be published on the topic. Two central themes were evident in these: firstly, raising awareness of the dangers of posting information online, the lack of personal privacy and the need for new legislation around social media (5); and secondly, how the images and videos shared, re-shared and commented upon reveal a society obsessed with naming and 'slut-shaming' (7). Articles like 'Slane sex act photos: A salutary lesson of how social media can exploit and abuse' (O'Brien

(2013a), *The Irish Times*) highlight the dangers of posting certain information online and called on a society engrossed in a world of social media to become more aware of the consequences of sharing material online. The author, aware that cyberbullying and invasion of privacy are problems confronting young people today, listed practical steps obtained from Spunout.ie to take if a person is affected by or falls victim to online abuse. Parental responsibility was also emphasised in an article that served to raise awareness that this could happen to *any* child (O'Brien (2013b), *The Irish Times*). The articles under the first theme are written with a serious and educational tone, utilising the Slane incident as a starting point for a public discourse on how social media has the ability to abuse, exploit and create victims. Mullally (2013a) in *The Irish Times,* along with other journalists writing articles of this nature, argued that the anonymity associated with social media plays into a culture which values participation over empathy.

Articles under the second theme focused mainly on how the 'Slane girl' incident drew our attention to the persistence of misogynistic values and negative double standards in Irish society, now bolstered in social media (e.g. 'Slane Girl incident shows double standard alive and well' by Harrington (2013) in *Irish Examiner*). Such articles asked people to think about who is really to blame here: the girl, the boy, the man who uploaded the photographs or all of us because we are all part of a society in which women are hated.

Mullally (2013b) in *The Irish Times* combined elements of both themes in her article. People, she wrote, seem to disregard the repercussions of their online activity, which is clearly evident in the Slane incident, as the girl involved was criticised and humiliated for her actions, while the men involved were met with a '*virtual high-fiving*'.

However, a common theme that can be seen in the majority of these articles is that the photographs and videos should not have been uploaded in the first place. Reference to Hannah Smith, a girl who took her own life after being subjected to online abuse on the Ask.fm website, was made in two articles to highlight the dangers of online bullying and abuse (O'Sullivan (2013), *Irish Examiner*; Gye (2013), *Daily Mail*). However, Eve Wiseman in *The Guardian* (2013) newspaper wrote that there is nothing new about the humiliation of girls by boys and by gossip; what was different about the 'Slane girl' incident was that the hurt and the consequences were laid bare by the postings, as well as the misogyny and the hatred directed at sexually active young girls. She argued that there was power in '*the painful transparency*' or that there could be if we learned how to use it. However, the diagnosis of the problem in the articles varied: it was either the fault of young girls who behaved badly, or it was a problem generated by social media networking, or it was a manifestation of deep-seated misogyny in society at large. The solutions also varied accordingly: from seeking to make parents and young girls responsible for their conduct and indiscretions, to looking for stronger regulation of social media, and finally to calling for a radical transformation of societal attitudes towards women and their sexualities. In this latter respect, some of the media coverage on the 'Slane girl' incident was the most attuned to issues of gender (in)equality and provided the only examples of public discourse analysed in this study in which victim-blaming, 'slut-shaming' and placing the burden of responsibility on girls for unwanted sexual attention were critiqued. Along with some of the debate surrounding Grand Theft Auto V (*see below*), the 'Slane girl' incident was the only example of discourse in which misogyny was mentioned.

Case Study 3: Grand Theft Auto V

From early January 2013, the release of Grand Theft Auto V (the latest instalment in the Grand Theft Auto gaming franchise) generated considerable interest in the Irish media. It was also mentioned frequently as a concern in the interviews conducted with parents in the present study. Widely referred to in Irish print media, online articles and broadcast media as one of the best video games to be launched this year, the 'record-breaking' game of Grand Theft Auto V has been dealt with and interpreted in a number of different ways throughout these media. Its release was covered under a variety of headings (such as gaming reviews, technology, lifestyle/ entertainment), with news stories and opinion pieces ranging from critical acclaim to distain, and to discussion of the game on many levels.

Technology articles (6) and gaming reviews (4) were found to be the most prevalent form of print and online articles published on Grand Theft Auto V in the Irish media. Articles under these headings were informative and descriptive in nature, primarily detailing the cost of producing and marketing the game, the estimated earnings from the game and the franchise worldwide, the history of the Grand Theft Auto series from when it was first released in 1997 to the number of awards the game won at the 2013 annual Video Game Awards.

Although Grand Theft Auto V, similar to other titles in the series, has been given an over-18s gaming certificate due to its depiction of crime and dark undertones, only two of the gaming reviews and technology articles made explicit reference to this. In comparison, lifestyle/entertainment articles (2) and opinion pieces (1) were quick to draw attention to the age-rating certificate and the lack of legislation around the legal enforcement of PEGI ratings in Ireland.

The majority of the articles (8) give a detailed, albeit brief, description of the three main protagonists/characters in the game, as well as the criminal-oriented, multi-stage 'missions' and 'challenges' game enthusiasts will have to complete in order to succeed to the next 'mission'. Although the inherent violence, adult-themed content and negative depiction of women commonly associated with the Grand Theft Auto series are referred to in some of these articles (e.g. '*As expected, the game has more than its share of dark moments, with torture and misogyny rearing their heads at various times ...*' says O'Brien (2013c), *The Irish Times*), words such as 'addictive', 'worthy addition to the GTA history', 'compelling', 'masterpiece', 'attention to detail', 'creative', 'well-written', 'biggest' and 'baddest' dominated the gaming reviews, technology and lifestyle/entertainment articles. The acknowledgment of the violent and sexist aspects of the game, followed then by positive features complimentary to Grand Theft Auto V, is evident in a number of the articles. Boyd and Somers (2013), for example, state in their *Irish Times* review, '*If you can put aside the very questionable depiction of women in this video-game series, you'll have an amazing time disappearing in the streets of Los Santos in GTA5'*. Another example is Price (2013) in his *Irish Independent* review, where he states: '*Setting a new record for swear words (f**k, muthaf*****r and n****r are on repeat), the characters strive to be dislikable and Rockstar mandates that vicious violence is your only tool. The infamous torture scene is absolutely repellent. Set against the relentless 'satirical' amorality, Rockstar nonetheless has crafted its most compelling game world, sprawling, inviting, spectacular.'*

In contrast to these, there are opinion pieces such as 'Who would buy a violent video game for a child? Terrible parents, that's who' by Mitchell O'Connor (2013, *Irish Independent*) and lifestyle/opinion articles such as 'Grand Theft of their innocence' by O'Mahony (2013, *Irish Examiner*) and 'Violent video games shock as it gets devoured by mainstream' by Clarke (2013a, *The Irish Times*). These raise questions around the suitability of this game for children and pre-adults rather than focusing predominantly on factual information about the game itself. In her article, O'Mahony is notably addressing parents of children under 18 who express a wish to purchase the game; using direct language and visual imagery taken from the game, she explains how most parents may not be aware of its violent and highly sexualised content. To emphasise this, she lists examples of behaviours one may be expected to do within the game in order to complete 'a mission': '*The themes are crude and misogynistic, and the sex element of the game gives an "excitement" rating and an ability to use the controls to "thrust" in and out. The torture scenes are also very disturbing: pulling out teeth with a pliers, using a waterboarding torture technique by pouring a flammable liquid over a victim tied to a chair; smashing kneecaps with a monkey wrench; giving electric shocks using spark plugs ...*' Utilising quotes from a mother of a 14-year-old boy who plays the game and a spokesperson from a mental health service, O'Mahony (2013, *Irish Examiner*) highlights how the Grand Theft Auto series is unsuitable for children under the age of 18 and may affect their behavioural and psychological development, blurring the lines between reality and game play.

The negative representation of women within the game is also touched upon in these articles: the lack of a strong, female lead character is one of the main criticisms of the Grand Theft Auto series. By portraying women as either prostitutes or lap dancers, it is argued in these articles

223

that this could contribute to negative treatment of women in society. Mitchell O'Connor (2013, *Irish Independent*) and Clarke (2013b, *The Irish Times*) discuss the game and the influences it may have on children and on society. Acknowledging the slippery dilemmas the game poses for him, Clarke queries whether we as a society have mainstreamed this type of violence, enticing the reader to question themselves on 'Do we really believe the extreme violence offers a commentary on society or are we using that argument to excuse our own bloodlust?'. Seeing a close link between violent games and violent behaviour, Mitchell O'Connor in her *Irish Independent* article makes a plea to parents and other parental figures to become more aware of what they are purchasing for their children.

A number of news articles (3) were published in late November 2013 detailing how the Principal and teaching staff of a primary school in Mullingar, Co Westmeath, wrote a letter to all parents of children attending the school urging them *not* to purchase Grand Theft Auto V for their children for Christmas. Aware that a lot of the children in the school were asking for this game, it was reported (Gittens, 2013) that the letters sent to the parents highlighted the possible negative effects that video games (in particular the Grand Theft Auto series), TV programmes and DVDs may have on children's mental well-being and behaviour.

The arrival of Grand Theft Auto V on the Irish market in 2013 provides a good example of the interconnections between commercialisation and sexualisation, as evidenced in Irish media coverage of its arrival. Parents were informed that they would be 'plagued by requests' to buy it and they were encouraged to resist the 'pester power' from teens to buy the game, which has an over-18s gaming certificate, for Christmas. At the same time, the articles alerted parents to the game's highly violent and 'sexualised content'. The alleged damaging effects of this form of entertainment for teens were underscored by, for example, the assignment of blame on this game by judges when presiding over cases of sexual offences committed against women and by contributions from mental health specialists who made reference to young people's developing sexualities and who drew connections between the influence of sexually violent video games on behaviour (O'Mahony, 2013).

Appendix 10: Summary of complaints made to the Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland (ASAI), relating to children and advertising for the period January 2012 to March 2013

ASAI Bulletin, Batch No. and Reference	Product	Advertiser	Medium	Complaint	Result and Sanction
13/1, 212, 19881	Food and beverages	Just Eat Ireland Ltd.	Internet and Outdoor	Two complaints relating to the message of the advertisement for takeways claimed that it was aimed at teenagers and that it was too manipulative in a context of rising obesity and unhealthy eating.	**Complaints upheld.** The advertisement conveyed a negative message regarding food preparation at home to children and young people and it was not in compliance with the Code of Practice. The advertisement must not be used in its current format again.
12/6, 211, 19659	Charities	MS Ireland	Leaflet and brochure	The complaint claimed it was inappropriate for advertisers to offer thank-you gifts to children who raised money for this fund-raising event (a readathon) and that it was inappropriate that the school was used as a venue to distribute the leaflet. That the complainant's six-year-old daughter was very upset that she would not receive a free gift when she found out that it would not be feasible for her to raise the amount required.	**Complaint not upheld.** The majority of children wishing to participate received permission from their school/ teacher or in many cases their parents. Only 4% of participants signed up directly with advertisers through the website or local library. Children were not targeted inappropriately and it was not a breach of the Code involved. The ASAI Complaints Committee took into account that the readathon had been running for 25 years and that this was the first complaint received.
12/4, 209, 18916	Food and beverages	Britvic and Chemistry	Outdoor	A number of complaints were generated, concerning the advertisements (Club 'best bits') were not suitable or appropriate for public display where children were likely to see them.	**Complaints upheld.** Outdoor posters were visible to all and the views of the wider public, including those with concerns in relation to children, had to be considered.

ASAI Bulletin, Batch No. and Reference	Product	Advertiser	Medium	Complaint	Result and Sanction
12/5, 210, 18907	Charities	ISPCC	Radio and Outdoor	*Radio*: The complainant argued that language was inappropriate for broadcast on radio and was concerned about the effect on younger listeners. Outdoor: Two complainants considered the advertisements referring to the words 'bitch' and 'bastard' were unsuitable for public display and unsuitable to be viewed by children.	**Complaints not upheld.** The ASAI Complaints Committee on balance did not consider that the advertisements contravened the Code under the relevant sections, but it stated that it strongly advised the advertisers to take account of the nature of the concerns raised by complainants when preparing future advertising.
12/4, 209, 19228	Publishing	Radio Nova	Outdoor	Three complainants challenged whether the advertisements that referred to 'sex' was suitable for public display. Two complainants (one a school principal) objected to the posters being displayed in close proximity to a particular primary school because they appeared at first glance to read 'Addicted to Sex'.	**Complaints not upheld.** The ASAI Complaints Committee did not consider that the content of the advertising was likely to result in physical, mental or moral harm to children, nor was the content likely to frighten or disturb them. The Committee was of the view that the advertisement had not contravened the Code as it relates to children (Section 5.5).
12/3, 208, 18213	Telecommunications	Telefonica 48	TV/Radio/ Outdoor/ Internet Campaign – 'Go Conquer'	*TV*: Complainants objected to the TV advertisement on the basis that it was offensive, inappropriate and unsuitable for younger viewers. Some complainants considered that the lifestyle portrayed in this advertisement condoned and encouraged excessive drinking, promiscuity and casual sexual relations. The advertisement specifically appeared during the TV programme 'Home and Away' and this programme, also sponsored by Telefonica, attracted a teenage audience.	**Some complaints upheld and other not upheld.** *TV complaints:* Some complaints upheld, others not upheld. The TV advertising contravened a number of sections of the Code and a scheduling error (showing the advertisement during TV programme targeting teens) had occurred, which was subsequently corrected. Complaints relating to the sponsorship were not upheld, since the sponsorship featured content that was appropriate for all age groups. *Radio complaints:* Some complaints upheld, others not upheld.

ASAI Bulletin, Batch No. and Reference	Product	Advertiser	Medium	Complaint	Result and Sanction
				Radio: Complainants claimed that the radio advertisements condoned sexual promiscuity and binge drinking, encouraged behaviour that led to emotional damage and a lack of responsibility, used provocative language and were aired when children would be listening. *Outdoor*: Outdoor poster advertisements were claimed to be overtly sexual and unsuitable for public display, particularly for school-going children. *Internet*: The images used in the Internet advertising were unsuitable for display online.	The radio advertisements did not condone or encourage excessive consumption of alcohol or sexual promiscuity, but the abbreviation 'M.I.L.F.' caused offence and was distasteful and contravened sections of the Code. *Outdoor complaints:* Some complaints upheld, others not upheld. Some images did not exploit sexuality nor were they deemed overtly sexual; others were overtly sexual and were unrelated to the product on offer and contravened sections of the Code. *Internet complaints:* Some complaints upheld, others not upheld. Some advertisements were mildly sexual and not unsuitable for the target audience (18-22 year-olds); others were considered sexually exploitative and although unlikely to be viewed by children, they were deemed to be in contravention of some sections of the Code. The ASAI Complaints Committee found that those advertisements in breach of the Code should not be used in their current format again and expressed concern at the overall thrust of the campaign.
12/3, 208, 18534	Holiday/ travel	Stena Line	Press/ Radio/TV	Complainants claimed that Irish Ferries' advertisements contravened the Code because they portrayed scenarios of 21 and 10 children respectively getting into a car, which was unsafe practice.	**Complaints not upheld.** ASAI Complaints Committee considered that consumers would not interpret the advertisements as an encouragement to seat an inappropriate number of children in a car.
12/3, 208, 18496	Food and beverages	Kerry Foods – Denny and DDFH&B (agency)	TV	Complainants objected to the portrayal of the product as being 'natural' and the use of the classroom setting.	**Complaints not upheld.** The use of the school setting was not considered inappropriate and the claims made in the advertising script were not considered incorrect.

227

continued

ASAI Bulletin, Batch No. and Reference	Product	Advertiser	Medium	Complaint	Result and Sanction
12/2, 207, 17045	Food and beverages	Kraft Foods – Kenco and DDFH&B (agency)	TV	Two complainants objected to the advertisement being aired in the ad break of the 'X-Factor' on the basis that this programme was likely to have been viewed by children and that the advertisement was unsuitable for children.	**Complaints not upheld.** Considering the audience profile of the programme during which the advertisement was aired and the ex-19.30 restriction imposed by RTÉ and Clearcast, the advertisement was not considered to have contravened the relevant sections of the Code relating to children. The scenario portrayed was not considered overtly sexual or likely to result in mental or moral harm to children or likely to frighten or disturb them, and considered not in contravention of another section of the Code relating to children. No further action was deemed necessary.

Appendix 11: Summary of broadcasting complaints (relating to concerns about the welfare of children) and Decisions by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) covering the period September 2011 to February 2013

Complaint	Ref. No.	Station/ Programme	Date	Broadcasting complaints Decisions
9 O'Clock News – A news report on the deaths of two men as a result of heroin injection with accompanying images of heroin injection was considered by complainant to be offensive to youth/children who might have been viewing this because there was no prior warning from broadcaster.	92/12	Programme on RTÉ One TV	5 October 2012	**Complaint rejected.** The view of the BAI Executive Complaints Forum was that the images did not encourage or present in a favourable light the use of drugs, so the news item was not contrary to the Code of Programme Standards. For this among other reasons, the complaint was rejected.
What's Ireland Eating – Statements made in relation to infant feeding were misleading, inaccurate and had the potential to cause harm.	121/12	Programme on RTÉ One TV	7 October 2012	**Complaint rejected.** The BAI Executive Complaints Forum acknowledged the use of the word 'formula' as distinct from milk, but was of the view that there was no deliberate attempt to mislead the viewer.
Advertisement for film *Taken 2* – Film trailer for *Taken 2* engendered fear in children.	88/12	Advertisement on RTÉ2 TV	23 September 2012	**Complaint rejected.** The decision of the BAI Executive Complaints Forum communicated to the broadcaster that the potential for the trailer to frighten some children should have been given consideration when scheduling the trailer at 4.15pm on a Sunday afternoon. However, the complaint did not raise potential issues that warranted further investigation.
What's Ireland Eating – Information provided was inaccurate, misleading about feeding infants and there was a lack of information about the benefit of breastfeeding	95/12	Programme on RTÉ One TV	27 July 2012	**Complaint rejected.** The BAI Executive Complaints Forum acknowledged the use of the word 'formula' as distinct from milk in the programme, but was of the view that there was no deliberate attempt to mislead the viewer. The complaint was deemed resolved.

Complaint	Ref. No.	Station/Programme	Date	Broadcasting complaints Decisions
Drivetime – A vox pop aired that included the 'F' word, a violation of the Code with regard to the protection for children not to permit coarse and offensive language.	216/11	Programme on RTÉ Radio 1	8 December 2011	**Complaint upheld.** The BAI Executive Complaints Forum found that the programme did not comply with Section 2.2 (due care) and Section 3.3.1 (coarse and offensive language) of the Code of Programme Standards.
The Big C – The programme was aired at approximately 9.30pm when many children would have been watching what many parents perceive as a family channel. The programme depicted a man having anal sex with a woman.	19/12	Programme on RTÉ2 TV	27 January 2012	**Complaint rejected.** Upon reviewing the material, it was the view of the BAI Executive Complaints Forum that the scene did not depict a man having anal sex as claimed by the complainant, that the programme was aired after the watershed and that a warning had also been broadcast before the programme started. The Forum found that the complaint did not raise issues requiring further consideration.
Desperate Housewives – The programme is not suitable viewing for 5pm, that there were scenes of a sexual nature and conversations about intercourse which were not suitable for children to be watching during summer holidays.	170/11	Programme on RTÉ One TV	10 August 2011	**Complaint upheld.** The BAI Executive Complaints Forum was of the view that the episode was not sufficiently edited for broadcast at 5pm, considering that children could be part of the audience, and the use of the 'PS' classification was not sufficient to mitigate the strong adult nature of particular scenes in the broadcast. The complaint was upheld under Section 2.2 (due care), Section 2.3 (protection for children) and Section 3.1 (sexual conduct) of the Code of Programme Standards.
A Girl's Guide to 21st Century Sex – There was a close-up view of both a woman and a man sexually aroused and children would be watching television later during summer holiday months.	153/11	Programme on TV3	7 June 2011	**Complaint rejected.** The view of the BAI Executive Complaints Forum was that the programme was broadcast after the accepted watershed of 9pm and it was aimed at an adult audience, that the broadcaster exercised due care with the scheduling of the broadcast. The complaint was rejected.
A Girl's Guide to 21st Century Sex – Complainant stated that the programme was offensive, sexually explicit and pornographic.	163/11	Programme on TV3	8 July 2011	**Complaint rejected.** The BAI Executive Complaints Forum decided that given the time of broadcast (well after the watershed), the audience guidance notes, the regular viewer expectations coupled with the editorial justification for the content, the broadcaster exercised due care with the scheduling, and the complaint was rejected.

continued

Complaint	Ref. No.	Station/ Programme	Date	Broadcasting complaints Decisions
Advertisement for film *Paranormal Activity* – Complainant referred to the inappropriate showing of an advertisement for *Paranormal Activity* on two dates before the watershed (9pm).	197/11 and 198/11	Advertisement on RTÉ One TV and RTÉ2 TV	7 October and 19 October 2011	**Complaint rejected.** The BAI Executive Complaints Forum took the view that the content of the advertisement was mild and unlikely to be of undue distress to the general audience viewing television at these times (90% over-15s watching RTÉ2 and 93% over-15s watching RTÉ One). The Forum recognised that RTÉ's copy clearance deemed the advertisement suitable for broadcast after 7pm with a restriction from the Saturday film slot at this time. But the Forum also acknowledged that care must be taken by broadcasters when scheduling such advertisements where there may be a higher level of younger viewers. The complaint was deemed resolved.
Advertisement for Kenco Coffee – The complainant stated that the advertisement was shown at an unsuitable time (19.30) and that the scenes depicted of a sexual encounter between adults in the advertisement would shock most young children, making them feel that adults in their personal relations are violent and crude.	208/11	Advert on RTÉ One TV	18 November 2011	**Complaint rejected.** The BAI Executive Complaints Forum took account of the time of broadcast and the audience profile watching the advertisement (2.4% under 11 years, 5.4% under 15 years, and 3.4% between 15 and 19 years). Considering this information and the humorous nature of the advertisement, the Forum considered the content acceptable. The complaint was deemed resolved.
Miriam Meets – During this interview, a story related by Emilio Estevez described masturbation in front of a pig. The complainant stated that due regard was not given by the broadcaster to the impact of such programming on the physical, mental or moral development of children.	139/11	Programme on RTÉ One TV	24 April 2011	**Complaint rejected.** The BAI Executive Complaints Forum was not satisfied that the content was harmful, since younger children would have been unlikely to discern the meaning. Considered in context, the tone and manner of discussion, the reference to masturbation was not considered explicit or gratuitous. The matter was deemed resolved.
Advertisements for programme *Swinging* – The complaints refer to two promos for the programme *Swinging* broadcast at 5.10pm and 4.30pm, which were adult and sexually suggestive and considered inappropriate for such an early evening slot and for children watching.	159/11 and 160/11	Advertisements on TV3	23 and 24 June 2011	**Complaints rejected.** The BAI Executive Complaints Forum decided that the two promos in question were sufficiently moderate for broadcast in the afternoon schedule. The sexual content was beyond the comprehension of younger children and no content could be deemed harmful to children. The matter was deemed resolved.

Appendix 12: Office of the Data Protection Commissioner (Ireland) – Case studies relating to 'minors', 1996–2011

Case study	Complaint	Nature of complaint	Outcome
7/97	**Direct mailing to children.** Complaint by parent. Issues of fair obtaining and keeping data longer than necessary.	A father complained that his children had received direct mail from a company making a product used mainly by children. The complainant took the view that children were more vulnerable than adults to manipulation by marketing and should not be targeted in such a way.	After the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner took up the matter, the agency that carried out the company's marketing activities deleted the data relating to the children in question, but mentioned that the children had responded to an earlier once-off promotional campaign. The agency stated that it kept this data for a period of a year and the Office accepted that this was reasonable in this case because the data were obtained for a single purpose, the conduct of the earlier campaign.
10/98	**School website.** Personal data relating to children. Issue of fair obtaining.	A parent concerned about the publishing of personal details about children on the school website complained on the grounds that this could expose children to unnecessary risk. After raising the matter with school authorities, the parent was dissatisfied with the response received.	The School Principal was contacted to arrange for the deletion of the relevant material from the website, pending a meeting. At the meeting, the Principal accepted the points raised by the Office in relation to the legislative requirements and undertook not to post personal details of school children on the website without the authorisation of a parent/guardian. The Office pointed out that '*the vigilance of parents played a key role in ensuring that the school was made aware of its data protection responsibilities*'.
6/2002	**Women's Mini-Marathon.** Unauthorised and incompatible disclosure. Internet photographs. Informed consent.	A mother who took part in the marathon with her 14-year-old daughter complained when her daughter subsequently received a letter in July 2002 from a UK company offering her photographs of herself taken on the day, which also appeared on the company's website.	At the request of the Office, the photographs were removed from the company's website. The organisers of the marathon gave access to the company to their database of participants and the company offered the photographs to the participants for sale. The participants were not made aware of this when they signed up for the event. Following meetings with the Office, the organisers of the marathon agreed to revise their procedures in accordance with data protection requirements and to give participants the option regarding photographs in future.

Case study	Complaint	Nature of complaint	Outcome
2/2003	**PMI Ltd.** Mailing list rented in good faith by a bank resulted in minors being marketed credit cards, without the bank having first secured the proper consent.	This involved a complaint made by an individual that his 10-year-old daughter had received unsolicited mail from a bank offering her a credit card.	PMI, with whom the bank had a contract, provided it with data, which included data relating to 202 persons under 18 years. The bank and PMI, as data controllers, were found to be in contravention of the relevant section of the legislation. The error was rectified and additional stringent checks put in place to ensure that this does not happen again.
10/2003	**Bank of Ireland.** Marketing to 12 and 13 year-old school children.	A number of complaints were received by the Office relating to marketing activity by Bank of Ireland in schools where 12 and 13 year-olds had received presentations by bank staff and offered the opportunity to open accounts. The complaints related to lack of parental consent, details on parents being sought and the procedure by which the teacher confirmed students' identities. When an account was closed at parents' request, the details were still retained by the bank for a period of six years.	Before the Office made a decision on the matter, the bank altered its policy to focus this marketing activity on Transition Year students and classes taking banking as part of the school curriculum. Following discussion with the Office, the bank introduced a new application form making it clear to students that by consenting they were allowing the bank to verify the information by contacting their teacher. The bank had a statutory obligation to retain the data for the period identified, but the Office asserted that the data should not be kept for any longer than the period and for the purpose defined. The Office did point out that the issue '*raised sensitive issues regarding children and their capacity to give consent. Parents, teachers and most of all students should be cautious when faced with any marketing campaigns. The test is whether the young person can reasonably be said to understand the implications of supplying personal data and giving consent*'.
4/2006	**Interactive Voice Technologies.** Unsolicited text messages.	A mobile phone service provider informed the Office that two of its customers (one a minor) had received a number of unsolicited premium rate text messages relating to adult content subscription services sent by Interactive Voice Technologies (IVT). Both recipients denied they were customers of IVT and claimed that they had not consented to any of the messages.	When the Office investigated the matter, it found that this occurred because the mobile phone numbers had been recycled and these numbers had entered the IVT database when the original mobile phone numbers had subscribed to its service; that the numbers recycled had not been detected by the system. The Office considered the action to be in direct contravention of the legislation and it advised IVT (as the data controller) that it would have to take immediate corrective action to satisfy the Office that it was taking its data protection responsibilities seriously.

continued

Case study	Complaint	Nature of complaint	Outcome
			The company, after considering the matter, refunded the charges incurred by the two individuals involved and offered written apologies to both. As a gesture of goodwill, IVT purchased two dialysis machines at a cost of over €27,000 for donation to Temple Street Children's Hospital.
3/2008	**123.ie and Data Ireland.** A marketing campaign set up personalised website addresses and breached the Acts.	In the course of pursuing a number of complaints relating to a marketing campaign launched by the insurance company 123.ie, the company informed the Office that it had discovered that minors had been targeted in error.	123.ie worked with a data agency (Data Ireland), a subsidiary of An Post, in its execution of this postcard marketing campaign. The Office actively communicated with An Post on this matter to ensure that no further breaches of the Acts in relation to the use of databases held by An Post and in particular where those databases contain the details of minors. The Office viewed the inappropriate use of the personal data of children as a particularly serious breach of the Data Protection Acts.